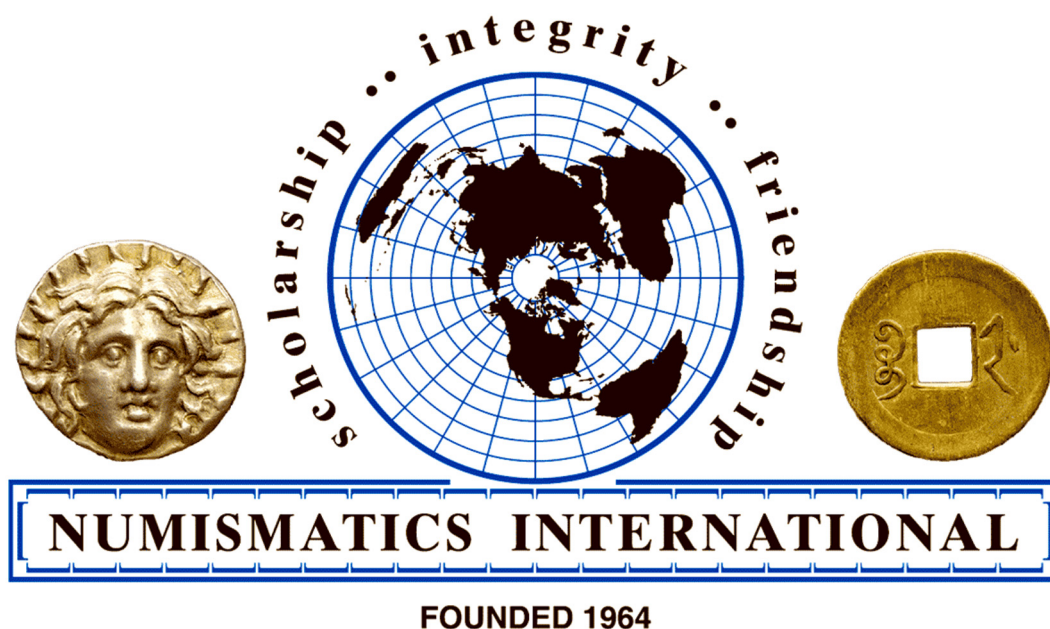


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Letter from the Editor 99

Jorge A. Proctor

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Welcome to the July/August edition of your NI Bulletin and we hope you enjoy it. This edition is devoted to a landmark work on the Spanish Colonial mint of Santa Fe (de Bogotá) and its branch office in Cartagena, both of which are in the Nuevo Reino de Granada (Colombia). The subject is the billon coinage in the early years of their operation. Much reference to the billon coinage has been made but with this new article from Proctor many open questions are answered and most doubts are cleared. In my own research I felt that Cartagena was the more likely mint for the 1621-22 coins (whether billon, silver or gold) of Nuevo Reino but could never find a definitive answer or “smoking gun.” With Proctor’s research and sound arguments it seems that most of this coinage must have been produced in Santa Fe rather than Cartagena. I am especially encouraged from two of his sources; Fray Pedro Simón (1574-ca.-1628) and the scribe Estacio Sanguino Rangel. You can find the citations at notes 77 & 78. The answer to the biggest question for me, and likely many others too, is that it appears that only the coins dated 1621, of any metal, are Cartagena and those of 1622 are Santa Fe; the polemic pieces dated prior to 1621 are still subject to some question.

This article was originally published* in Spanish but an English translation is vital for making available to the widest audience. It is also important that a work such as this be published in a single volume so researchers have all of it together. With that purpose in mind I beg the indulgence of our other contributors and correspondents whose works are in the queue.

My thanks to Jorge Proctor for publishing this seminal article in our bulletin and to Alan Luedeking for his translation into English. Through Jorge’s research and analysis, and Alan’s translation we now have a good understanding of the early mint. Take note that we’ve eased editing restrictions in order to make the article as accessible and useful to readers as we can. All editing errors or omissions fall to me.

Herman Blanton

*Jorge A. Proctor. “Las Monedas de Vellón Acuñadas en el Nuevo Reino de Granada en 1622 y 1626” part 1 in *Boletín numismatico* No. 100 (Año LIII 1er semestre de 2016) and part 2 in No. 101 (Año LIII 2º semestre de 2016) published in Bogotá by Numiscol, Fundación Numismáticos Colombianos.

The Billon Coins Struck in the Nuevo Reino de Granada in 1622 and 1626

Jorge A. Proctor, NI #2732

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Translated by Alan Luedeking, NI #2282

What is billon? Billon is a metal alloy composed of copper mixed with a small amount of high grade silver. The Greeks began minting coins with this alloy since antiquity, as did the Romans. In the same manner, the Kingdoms of Castile and León minted different denominations of billon coins all throughout the Middle Ages, causing great confusion, until the monetary system was finally reformed by the Catholic Monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella, under their monetary reforms in the Decree of Medina del Campo on June 13, 1497.

The decree of Medina del Campo orders that: “...in each of our said mints there shall be made coin of billon, that shall be called *blancas* [whites] of the fineness of seven grains, and of the size and weight of one hundred ninety two pieces per mark; and that two of these shall be worth one *maravedí* [Spanish unit of account]...”¹

The coins of billon formed the monetary foundation of the Castilian economy by the end of the fifteenth century and beginning of the sixteenth. Being thus, these were brought into the New World by the settlers who went on the initial voyages of discovery, where they became amongst the first coins to circulate in the Americas. This has been proven by archaeological excavations on La Isabela² (1494-1498) and Concepción de la Vega (1494-1562),³ in the Dominican Republic, and by finds in Nombre de Dios, Panama (1510-96)⁴ where billon coins struck during the reigns of Henry IV and the Catholic Monarchs have been found.

In 1505, with Spain determined to introduce its monetary system in the Americas, new billon coins were struck, as well as silver coins, with special designs for exclusive use in the Americas. These coins, of which the majority were billon, were sent for the first time to the Island of Hispaniola in 1506, and during the next 30 years were also sent to many of the other lands discovered in the Americas, including the city of Santa María la Antigua del Darién, in Castilla del Oro. (The remains of this city can be found today on Colombian territory.)⁵

By the middle of the decade of the 1530s, Spain decided to authorize the creation of the mints of Mexico (1535) and Santo Domingo (1536), which are authorized to mint, among their coinage, coins of billon. But Mexico, which began coining in 1536, at the end, only struck later on, some denominations of *maravedís* made of pure copper (which Spain would then call “billon without fineness”), while Santo Domingo, which began its operations in 1542 did come to make coins of billon during the complete length of its duration, including *cuartillos* [1/4 real] of billon of the value of 11 *maravedís*, alloying the mark of copper with 54 grains of silver (in all aspects a mixture that would later be called “*vellón rico*” [enriched billon] for its high silver content), which was only manufactured in its first years.⁶

In mainland Spain, the billon coinage that was being produced since the reign of the Catholic Monarchs continued to be made in the same manner and form, with the same designs allusive to these monarchs, until the last years of the reign of Charles I (V of the Holy Roman Empire), when on May 2, 1552 a new decree was signed wherein the fineness of silver they contained was lowered, their new fineness now being 5-1/2

grains instead of 7 (that is to say, silver sufficient to produce a fineness of 5-1/2 grains was now added to the copper).

Thereafter, these coins continued to be minted in this way until 1566, when under a new monarch, this being Philip II, a new decree is signed concerning the billon, today called the *Pragmática de la Nueva Estampa*. Besides *blancas* of the fineness of 4 grains, under this new law now there would be struck in Spain a new species of billon coins in *cuartillos* (1/4 of a real), *cuartos* (4 maravedís) and half *cuartos* (2 maravedís), of a fineness of two and a half deniers and two grains, which would be called *vellón rico* (enriched billon).⁷ In consequence of its high increment in the amount of silver it contained, and taking advantage of its completely new appearance, fakes of this coin rapidly propagated, which after the discovery of one of the counterfeiting factories in Liege, Belgium in 1574, their minting was suspended.

Around 1580, in response to the discredited enriched billon coinage, *cuartos* and half *cuartos* with new designs were made.⁸ But now, these would have the same fineness of 4 grains that was decreed in 1566 for the *blancas*, which continued to be made with the same legends and fineness already authorized in that same year of 1566. Although the quantity of these coins made is unknown, it must have been numerous since, between 1586 and 1587, mention is made of the harm and inconvenience caused by the “great amount of coinage of billon” that circulated by those dates in the kingdom.⁹ King Phillip II, on May 22, 1591 finally ordered the suspension of the manufacture of this coinage and to not restart it without express permission.

On December 1, 1596, following the recommendations of the so-called *Junta de Madrid* of 1594, Phillip II decides to order the manufacture of new coins of 4, 2, and 1 maravedís, but of pure copper without any silver fineness.¹⁰ But this decision must have caused immediate protests, since on February 1, 1597, by a new decree, ordered that 1 grain of silver be added, which would maintain the appearance of legality and retain its character as truly a billon coin.

After the death of Phillip II, September 13, 1598, King Phillip III, among the policies of his father, inherited this billon coinage with a fineness of 1 grain of silver. But only until June 13, 1602, Phillip III dictated a new ordinance which eliminated the alloying of silver from this denomination, also reducing its weight and size to one half of what was being minted up to this time.¹¹ As if this were little enough, under the pretext of a supposed equality amongst all circulating coinage of “billon”, as they continued to be called, it was ordered on September 18, 1603, that the value of all billon coins struck before 1602 be doubled by means of a counterstamp that would certify their new nominal value.

The Crown, looking for profits with less effort, signed agreements with important businessmen of the time, so that they would take charge of making these coins at their expense, in exchange for diverse remuneration. The manufacture of these coins was constant until November 22, 1608, when the king, in exchange for a donation from the Courts of Castile of 17-1/2 million ducats (at a term of 2-1/2 million for seven years) and accepting the conditions of the procurators of September 5, 1607, decreed the suspension of the minting of these coins for a period of twenty years.¹² Being thus, only one minting was made, exceptionally, between 1608 and 1617, this one being the one authorized in May of 1612, in order to use up a certain [amount] of copper that had

remained in storage at the Mint of Segovia when the prohibition was handed down in 1608.

By 1617, the need being once again present, the procurators decide to relieve the king of the conditions stipulated in 1608, giving him now permission to begin again the production, although limiting the quantity that would be permitted to be minted. On September 3, 1617, the royal decree is made public and the manufacture began anew.

In this climate in Spain, the Council of the Indies, in 1618, in response to letters sent from Santa Fe [today Bogotá, Colombia] on June 2, 1614,¹³ and May 30, 1615,¹⁴ informs the king that they were in agreement that a mint should be established at Santa Fe, in the New Kingdom of Granada, and that “dies should be sent for the manufacture in it of single escudos, reales of two, singles and half, so that with this small change, commerce and trade could take place between the residents, remaining in the land, without the right to remove it from there, as would be done if doubloons, eight reales and four reales were minted there.”¹⁵

The king was in agreement with the viewpoint of the Council. But now, seeing that the opinion of the Council was that it would be better to mint small change in the Indies, and motivated by the coining of billon that was being carried out in Spain, asks the Council that when they started to see all that was necessary for this mint, that they should also consider whether they would have anything against “two million in billon coinage being minted in all of the Indies”¹⁶ so that these would serve as succor [to daily commerce].

We have no news of the deliberations of the Council of the Indies during the year 1619. But we do have their response. On January 25, 1620, this Council informs the king that after long conversations and conferences, it had been decided to accept the offer of Captain Alonso Turrillo de Yebra, military engineer to His Majesty, who committed himself to building the mint and take [with him] all of the staff, officials, tools and instruments necessary for the work, at his own expense. Moreover, it was the opinion of the Council that, in addition to the other coins that were to be minted, “*to facilitate trade and common commerce, also enriched billon coins should be made, alloyed at four marks of copper and one of silver.*”¹⁷ This enriched billon coinage, it was said, would increase the Royal coffers by some 35%, and being able to be made in a factory invented by the selfsame Turrillo, the profits would be increased by an additional 5% (that is, rendering a total revenue of 40%, which would represent a profit of 120,000 ducats, were 300,000 ducats of this coinage to be minted.) With this letter, and so that the king could see the form that this coin would take, “a sample coin of enriched billon was included.”¹⁸

Finally, as to whether it would be inconvenient to mint two million in billon coinage in the Indies, it was the viewpoint of the Council that in no case should this matter be considered at this time, for the great inconveniences that are represented [by this].¹⁹ It is clear that having already proposed a coin that could be considered provincial by its silver content, that could replace the *plata corriente* [un-coined silver circulating as money, which may or may not be marked, such as the specimen illustrated here] as a

means of exchange in local commerce, without the fear that anybody would wish to export it, there was therefore no need to further discuss this matter.

Although the denomination chosen for this coinage is not mentioned in this letter of January 1620, it is evident that by this date the cuartillo had been selected, as would be mentioned further on. The selection of this denomination explains the why of the use of enriched billon in it, since, in contrast to maravedís, which had for years already been made in Spain deprived of all silver fineness whatsoever, the same was not the case with the cuartillos, which would have caused these to lose their legal standing as a multiple of the real, for which this denomination would now follow the precedent that had been established by the cuartillos that had been minted at Santo Domingo (authorized in 1541) and in Spain (authorized in 1566), which had been manufactured out of enriched billon.



On April 1, 1620, the Royal Decree with the ordinances for the establishment of the mint in the Nuevo Reino de Granada is signed, which approved the manufacture of coins of gold in the denominations of two and one escudos, and of silver in the denominations of eight, four, two, one, and half reales, as well as cuartillos of enriched billon.²⁰ This ordinance does not leave any doubt as to where this mint was to be established, in order to there, manufacture the coins that it authorized, saying: “*Firstly, you are to make the aforesaid mint in the city of Santa Fe from its first foundations...*”²¹ Lastly, and in reference to the enriched billon coinage, this [decree] says the following, (only the articles referring to the billon coins are included):

“4 ~ *The coinage of Enriched Billon that as has been said you are to manufacture for the contracting and minor commerce of the aforesaid Kingdom is to be alloyed to four marks of copper and One of silver of fineness of eleven deniers and four grains as is done in The rest of the mints of these Kingdoms*

5 ~ *Each mark Made into coin of this Alloy is to Have a Value of Twenty and five Reales and each Real four pieces And All the Mark One Hundred pieces and every cuartillo forty eight grains of weight of which type I want and order that at present three hundred thousand ducats be made for Which you are to provide at your expense All of the copper necessary Such that in performing this Manufacture There remains to increase my Treasury besides the common Benefit at the Rate of Thirty five per Cent in Manner that Manufacturing one hundred and Thirty five thousand ducats there are to be for me The thirty five thousand so that to extract the One Hundred and Twenty thousand ducats which belong to me you are to fabricate fou hundred and Twenty thousand ducats which are to be charged by The officials of my Royal Treasury of the said Kingdom*

6 ~ *The Insignias that this Coin is to Have shall be on one side The Arms of castile and leon and on the other two columns With the pomegranate in between insignia of the aforesaid city of santa fe and the plus Vltra to the sides and the letter of the Name of the assayer on the lower part and the legend on the Whole said coin to read Thus.*

Philippus Tertius Ispaniar / et Indiar/ Rex. as appears in the stamped dies that Go on the paper included signed by my subscribed secretary,

7 ~ and because You the aforementioned captain Alonso Turrillo have offered me that the manufacture of this coinage of Enriched Billon you are to make with a factory which by Your industry you have invented from which is to follow Benefit to my Treasury in the Amount of another five per cent more Which are to belong to my Royal Treasury and come under the possession of the aforesaid Royal officials in addition to the Thirty five per cent which As is said in The preceding Chapter belong to me by the increase Included in this coinage and you are to be obligated that having passed The aforesaid fifteen years the aforesaid factory is to remain for me in the same form and manner as you have Used it with All of the instruments of its function”²²

Captain Alonso Turrillo de Yebra, having already been identified as the man charged with this project on April 1, 1620, he is granted, by separate decrees, the titles of *regidor* (alderman) of Santa Fe,²³ and Treasurer of the Mint that he committed to build in that city. Both of these were conceded for a period of fifteen years, so that during this period it should be he who would be in charge of the foundation and administration of the same.²⁴

With the intention of putting this plan in action, several other decrees were drafted that same day in reference to this project. Among these were one which even carried a copy of the plant and model of the factory of the mint, detailing exactly how it was to be built by Captain Turrillo. Leaving no detail off, this plant was now directed to the Audiencia* of Santa Fe, with instructions to its President and Council members that they should see the attachments that would serve to direct them, so that “as a matter of such import, you shall take particular care that it be executed completely and in every detail, in accordance to what therein is contained and declared, helping and favoring the aforesaid captain Alonso Turrillo so that he for his part can comply with all that to which he is obligated so that he shall not be stymied in the least in what I have granted him.”²⁵

In anticipation of the prompt execution of this project, the decree for the President and Council members of the Audiencia concludes by asking that after the mint is established and coining operations began in it, that an order be given that all *plata corriente* should be consumed and no longer utilized nor traded by any person in commerce.

On May 25, 1620 the preparations continued, and by petition of the selfsame Alonso Turrillo de Yebra, the king grants him a license to allow him to name people who can serve his office of treasurer, in the event that he would find himself forced to absent himself [from the post].²⁶ Also, that same day, a decree is sent to the Accountant of the Island of Cuba, Juan de Eguiluz, instructing him to furnish whomever Turrillo would send as his representative the copper necessary for the coining of the enriched billon coins, up to a maximum of 400 quintals [about 40,000 lb—*Ed.*] per year, and at the same price as that agreed upon for things in the service of the king.²⁷

* “Audiencia” or “Real Audiencia” translates officially as “Royal Audience”; this was the highest secular court or tribunal established by the king in a province or city. Its members typically answered only to the governor, the viceroy, or to the king himself. We will simply use the original term *Audiencia* throughout. —*Transl.*

Lastly, and also by petition of Turrillo, on June 10, 1620 the king grants him a license to purchase the quantity of silver that would be necessary, but only for the manufacturing and alloying of the enriched billon coinage.²⁸

Also on this day another decree is sent to the Audiencia of Santa Fe, requesting that they remit their opinion as to whether it would be convenient, or not, to install in Cartagena an office (a branch) of the mint of Santa Fe, in order to consume the *plata corriente* that existed in that province, in order to also there be able to coin the necessary coinage to be used in its trade and commerce, [and] to be able to supply the Islands of Barlovento [Windward Islands—*Ed.*] and its other surrounding communities.²⁹ With the importance of this matter, the Governor and Captain General of the Province and City of Cartagena, Don García de Girón, receives an identical one, wherein he is asked to send to the President and Councillors of the Audiencia in Santa Fe, a report very distinctive, detailed, and particular of the pros and cons that it might have, so that having considered everything, the most convenient resolution [decision] could be reached, so that this could serve during their deliberations.³⁰

But these last two decrees referent to the branch mint to be established at Cartagena would be deferred on September 20, 1620, when the king signed a new one explaining that Turrillo had told him that if he had to await in Cartagena the resolution of the Audiencia in Santa Fe, this would take two months, which would be of great expense and inconvenience to him and to the officials going with him. Therefore, and by means of this new decree, the king now empowered the Governor of Cartagena so that he, if he had no objections, could give the order to establish this branch.³¹

Given its importance, here we include the transcript of the decree of September 20, 1620, which authorizes the establishment of a branch mint office at Cartagena (transcription by the author):

[Margin note inscribed on the original as a summary of the document:]

*“The aforementioned”*¹⁸

To the Governor and officials of Cartagena sending you what is requested by captain Turrillo concerning that there should be established in that city a branch office of the mint that he is to found in the new Kingdom of Granada wherein is to be struck the plata Corriente that should Be in that Land

[Document text:]

The King

Don Garcia Giron my Governor and Captain general of the province of cartagena and officials of my Royal Treasury of it having supplicated of me captain Alonso Turrillo, my military engineer that by my order is going to found a Mint in The city of of [sic] Santa fe of the New Kingdom of Granada so that to Consume the Plata corriente that is found in that Province and provide the islands of barlovento and others surrounding with coinage for their Trade and Commerce he be given License So that In that City be established A branch office of the said Mint wherein be minted The said coinage since besides the General Benefit that would result from Picking up the said Plata corriente, it would excuse The expenses and costs that are had by taking it to be Minted to the said Mint . by One, my decree dated on ten of June of this year, I sent you to Order that Having Seen and considered this With the attention the matter Requires You Send precise and particular Report of the pros and Cons had, to the President And oidores

of my Royal audiencia of the said city of Santa fe so that having seen All With whatever again is Offered to them pertaining to that Kingdom they should take the Resolution that most Convenes = and now the said Captain Alonso Turrillo has Reported to me that if he had to wait in that city The resolution of my aforementioned audiencia Many Costs and expenses would follow besides the Inconvenience that he and the people that he brings with him would Have since it would be necessary to wait more than two months He Supplicated to me that I Order that with only your opinion it be done and Having been seen by those of my Council of the indies I've had it as good to remit to you the above mentioned As by the present I do remit so that it seeming necessary to you that the said branch office be made and not having objections you provide and give order That it be done and executed and if you Have it, you will Advise me later so that whatever is Convenient be provided made in san Lorenzo at Twentieth of september of One Thousand and six hundred and Twenty years I the king By order of the King our Sire Pedro de Ledesma signed by the Council''³²

The intention of Captain Alonso Turrillo de Yebra was to travel with his officials to Cartagena in the care of the fleet of galleons of Tierra Firme of 1621. But the Doctor Don Pedro Marmolejo, President of the House of Trade, did not give him space.³³ Therefore, he had to make preparations to leave nearly a month earlier than this fleet, embarking on a single 150-ton ship named the *Nuestra Señora del Rosario y San Diego*, of the master Fermín de Inurrica.³⁴ Turrillo departs for Cartagena at the end of February of 1621. With him were his wife and daughter and his officials, seven of them with their families, and all of the tools and instruments necessary to make coin.³⁵

Turrillo arrives in Cartagena on April 9, 1621.³⁶ During his voyage, back in Spain, King Phillip III dies on March 31, 1621. But Turrillo does not learn of this until later (it wasn't until July 25th of that same year that the Audiencia of Santa Fe could notify Spain that they had received the official notice of the death of the king).³⁷

As Turrillo himself would relate later on, his arrival had been most welcome to all, since upon his arrival there had already been much news of the resolutions the king had taken concerning the consumption of the *plata correinte* and the minting of coinage in its place.³⁸ To the comments of Turrillo we can now add that for sure his arrival was welcome, since at that moment no news was yet had in Cartagena that Turrillo planned to mint coinage of enriched billon in that district.

Turrillo immediately went before Don García Girón, the Governor and Captain General of the Province and city of Cartagena, and his royal officials, and presented them with the royal decrees that were addressed to them, including the one of September 20, 1620, which said that they did not have to await the opinion of the Royal Audiencia of Santa Fe, but could proceed with just the authorization of Governor Girón and his royal officials to open a branch office of the mint in that city.

The governor and his officials did not find any inconvenience in that the branch mint office be built, and together drafted an ordinance that as a convenient matter it should be done. Captain Turrillo rapidly selected an adequate house where he erected the necessary facilities to make the coins and began to procure the necessary things to commence the production.

But a few days later Turrillo had to stop all of these preparations abruptly, when the governor came to him and asked him for the order that he brought for the foundation of the mint and the manufacture of the new coinage. Since Cartagena was only to be a

branch office of the principal mint at Santa Fe, no proper ordinance was made for Cartagena. For which, it not seeming undesirable to him, Turrillo showed him the order that was directed to the Audiencia of Santa Fe, this being the decree of April 1, 1620, for the establishment of the mint at Santa Fe.³⁹ But now, noticing the authorization for the cuartillos of enriched billon, the governor ordered Turrillo to leave the decree with him, which Turrillo did, and without waiting, he communicated it to the officials of that city so that they could discuss the matter of the cuartillos of enriched billon and see if there was feasibility and convenience for their manufacture.

By means of this news, and in light of the dispatch that only permitted the establishment of the branch if there were no objections, there was a change of mind and on April 22, 1621 it was decided that this branch would not be established until the disagreement over the cuartillos of enriched billon could be resolved; this notice being dispatched to the Royal Audiencia of Santa Fe.⁴⁰ Turrillo rapidly protested, presenting a petition before the governor and officials of the Royal Treasury of Cartagena, which carried attached letters, copies of letters and ordinances. In this petition Turrillo alleged that if not permitted to strike coin in that city, which would keep his staff busy, they would absent themselves to seek other means of sustenance, and it would be very difficult later to find others in that area.

On May 4, 1621 this petition was seen before: Don García Girón, Governor and Captain General of the Province and city of Cartagena, Pedro Guiral de Berrio, Accountant in Chief of the *Contraduria* (Accounting office) of the city of Santa Fe, Francisco de Rebolledo, Treasurer of Cartagena, and Juan de la Huerta, Accountant of Cartagena. These officials, in response to the reason offered by Turrillo to permit the establishment of the branch mint office in that city, said: “...*Attending to the Reason and others that are offered Are of the Opinion that it is very ConVenient that the office be made in said city and manufacture in it Reales of Eight of Four of two of singles and halves and as to the rest be observed and Complied with what their Mercies Provided on Twenty and two days of the month of April Last Passed of this Present year...*”⁴¹

On that same day, the Scribe Andrés Pacheco, in person, presented a copy of this ordinance to Captain Turrillo, witnessed by Licentiate Don Fernando Sarria, Lieutenant General in that governorate and Marcos Roldán, Solicitor (*Procurador del número*) in that city.

On May 12, 1621 the Attorney General of Cartagena, Juan Nuñez Marmolejo, declared, concerning the introduction of the new coinage of enriched billon, of which His Majesty had ordered up to a certain quantity to be made in that city, that one was to presume the opposite of what had been stipulated, the will of the “Prince”⁴² having been moved by uncertain suggestions and accounts. It being thus, it was not considered prejudicial that the execution of those writings and Royal decrees be delayed, as this was being done in the expectation that the king, with better information, could [then] provide what they knew would be of greater convenience to his Royal service, and the good and utility of his vassals.⁴³ This being thus, he asked the governor to present the information to the monarch, to his Council of the Indies, and to the President and Councilors of the Audiencia of Santa Fe, so that better informed the king, “order not to proceed with the execution of the said Royal decrees in regard to the consumption of the *plata corriente* and new introduction of the aforementioned coinage of billon, at least in this city and its province.”⁴⁴

Having seen the information offered by Don García Girón, it was presented to Captain Alonso Turrillo de Yebra, who had been called up so that he could contradict it, annotating any objections he might have.

With the impossibility of striking enriched billon coins, which Turrillo himself had called “the principal objective for which I have come and this mint is founded”,⁴⁵ Turrillo writes to the Royal Audiencia of Santa Fe, sending them the copy of the order given by the king with a servant of his “satisfaction”.⁴⁶

On July 15, 1621 the Royal Audiencia of Santa Fe, in response to the petitions of Turrillo, dispatches a missive wherein they order that the *plata corriente* which existed in the governorates of Cartagena and Santa Marta be collected, smelted and refined to the fineness of 2,210 maravedís, and that coinage was to be made from it, by which, if the *plata corriente* were of lower fineness, the losses therefrom would run to the account of its owners. Besides this, the ordinance permitted that 60,000 ducats of the aforementioned coinage of enriched billon be made.⁴⁷ It must be mentioned that the requirement that the losses run to the account of the owners of the *plata corriente* was not the idea of the Audiencia but rather by suggestion of Turrillo, who had thus proposed it to the king, being approved by Royal decree of September 20, 1620.⁴⁸

The news of this new ordinance given by the Audiencia concerning the coinage of enriched billon caused immediate objections to be raised in the city of Santa Fe, for which the City Council presented a petition before the Audiencia on the 23rd or 24th of that same month of July, in which they requested that the aforementioned ordinance be amended.⁴⁹ Likewise, on July 29th, a great number of residents of Santa Fe write to the President of the Audiencia, asking him to suspend the making of enriched billon coinage, since its manufacture could only cause “total ruin”.⁵⁰ However, the (Controller) and *Oidor* (Judge) of the Audiencia of Santa Fe, Don Fernando de Saavedra, who was charged with handling the present case, found no inconveniences with it sufficient to cause the Audiencia to change its stance and the ordinance was dispatched on July 31st.⁵¹

While Turrillo waited, the situation worsened in Cartagena for him. In fact, he speaks of the fact that some of his officials had sued him, requesting reimbursement of what they had incurred for leaving their lands and homes for a purpose that had no effect.⁵²

Finally, on August 1, 1621, both Governor Girón and Turrillo write to the king.⁵³ Although the contents of Girón’s letter, which are mentioned by the monarch several times later on are unknown, for sure it was an explanation of his opposition to the coinage of enriched billon, and anticipating what Turrillo might say to the king.

In Turrillo’s letter of this date, he presented the king with a complete report of all the difficulties encountered since his arrival, and takes the opportunity to also speak extensively of the problems he had witnessed in Cartagena over the use of the *plata corriente* in that city. According to his letter, Turrillo also mentions that he had considered leaving the problems he was facing and returning to Spain in the galleons. But he had not dared to do so without having Royal approval. Likewise, he also did not travel to Santa Fe, since, even though he found himself fed up with so many delays, he had taken the decision to remain in Cartagena, since given the number of people and equipment he had brought, it would cost him another 5,000 ducats to make this trip, and if he found there even a small further delay, he would be totally ruined.⁵⁴

It is important to mention that it is in this letter where Turrillo tells us that “although I have made the office and in it some silver and gold will be minted, it will be very little, and I will only do it to remove the distrust of the officials who believe that no coin is to be made.”⁵⁵ With the intentions expressed by Turrillo, we do not know if in fact at the end he was able to mint any coins in both metals in Cartagena, or if further complications impeded him from doing so. Although it can be declared that he was able to strike a few coins at some moment between August and (at the latest) December of 1621, since today we know a few coins of 8 Reales with this date in their legends, which could only have been struck in this branch mint office.⁵⁶

Concluding his letter, Turrillo said that he would be dispatching it on the first available ship, being taken by Don Antonio de Vega, one of the officials whom he had taken to Cartagena, since, in addition to reading it, he could hear all first hand from the lips of this gentleman.⁵⁷

On the last days of August there arrived at Cartagena the ordinance of the Audiencia of Santa Fe of July 15, 1621, wherein they ordered that work of minting enriched billon coinage should commence in that city, and the *plata corriente* be extinguished. But this ordinance was not executed. In its place, on September 1, 1621 the officials at Cartagena wrote to the king, expressing their disagreement,⁵⁸ as did the Tribunal of the Holy Inquisition.⁵⁹ Don García Girón, who was one of the signers of the aforementioned letter written by the officials of Cartagena, also sends a personal letter to the king on September 2nd.⁶⁰ All these had the same common topic: that the enriched billon coins should not be made, even though they were in agreement that the *plata corriente* be withdrawn, but they asked that regular coins be made in its place.

Turrillo, in view of the fact that he had so many [mint] officials to maintain in Cartagena with nothing to occupy them, and that the governor did not permit him to make the enriched billon coinage, even though having received the authorization from the Audiencia, decided to begin the preparations to leave for the city of Santa Fe, taking with him all of his officials, tools and instruments to make coinage. That way he could put in motion the work in that city, while he asked the Audiencia for new orders to execute in Cartagena what they had already provided by ordinance.

Meanwhile, in Spain, having already received the protests of Cartagena, Santa Fe, and the letters of Turrillo, the king, by decree of January 22, 1622,⁶¹ sends to Don Juan de Mendoza y Luna, Marquis of Montesclaros, ex-viceroy of the Kingdom of New Spain (1603-1607) and of Perú (1607-1615) certain papers concerning this matter [received from] Captain Tomás de Cardona, Master of the King's Chamber (*Maestre de Cámara del Rey*), and of Diego Fernández Calvo, Attorney General of the city of Cartagena, so that he could offer his thoughts.

On January 24, 1622, the Marquis of Montesclaros sends his reply,⁶² in which he presents his disagreement with that gold and billon should be struck in America. But, since it was said that the *plata corriente* currently in circulation [there] did not have a fixed fineness, a certain weight, nor any official stamping, this would cause considerable losses to its owners upon being substituted for the coinage of 11 deniers and 4 grains, this being what had already been notified by the Attorney General of Cartagena, then he said that it would be convenient to order a coinage to be made of copper mixed with some silver, placing upon it a particular stamp, but making it in Potosí, not in Cartagena. According to the Marquis, being thus, this coin could be used

for daily commerce, without permitting it to leave nor have any value outside the province, which would prevent residents of other locales from admitting them. Moreover, being that it was mixed with so much copper, foreigners too would be averse to taking it out, since they would not profit therefrom.

The proposal of the Marquis of Montesclaros even included the suggestion that the sample and punches should be sent to Potosí, where the coinage could be manufactured [all] at once, up to a quantity of 200,000 ducats, this being greater than the quantity of *plata corriente* said by the Attorney General of Cartagena to be in circulation. From Potosí, the coins would be transported to Cartagena by sea, through Panama, where, once in Cartagena, they would be distributed by all the Royal Treasuries (*Cajas Reales*), so that all the royal officials could, with these coins, buy all the *plata corriente* there was in the province, paying their owners for it at the same value. This proposal eliminated the need to establish a new mint, for which reason, should this be approved, he suggested that the king could order that the establishment of the mint that had been carried over under the charge of Captain Turrillo should cease.

Although it is clear that the Marquis of Montesclaros and the Council of the Indies were not completely in agreement over everything, they were in agreement over what concerned the introduction of a billon coinage to Cartagena, to be used in replacement of the *plata corriente*. Therefore, while a new Commission was convened to study this matter in greater depth, and having already heard of the damages and inconveniences that Cartagena alleged would follow were the decrees dispatched by the Audiencia on July 31, 1621 to be followed, the king, on February 2, 1622 wrote again to the President and Councilors of his Royal Audience of Santa Fe,⁶³ and separately to Don Fernando de Saavedra,⁶⁴ *Oidor* [Judge] of that Audiencia. In these documents the king thanked them all very much for the great care and good intelligence they had placed in this matter, and for the report they had provided. The king now also wrote to Alonso Turrillo de Yebra,⁶⁵ letting him know that what had been agreed and resolved concerning the coinage of enriched billon and the consumption of the *plata corriente* continued in force, and to the Governor of Cartagena,⁶⁶ that he should no longer present any further opposition to this coinage, for which, by way of warning, he tells him:

*"...and having considered, and discussed the matter with the attention that its importance requires, and heard the prosecutor of that city, it is our opinion that despite the said contradictions, you shall observe, obey and execute The ordinance that my aforesaid Audiencia provided and dispatched In Virtue of it On the thirty first of July of the said year of six hundred and twenty one and in compliance with it thou shalt not impede, nor allow to be impeded The Manufacture of the aforesaid coin of enriched billon and the consumption of the plata corriente In It contained with the understanding that I make to you that if in fact or by any other means you impede or do not give all necessary assistance for its [its execution] it will be charged to your person and worldly goods all of the damages and Losses that should follow and be Caused thereby to my Royal treasury and to the said captain Alonso Turrillo."*⁶⁷

On March 20, 1622, the Commission that had been convened to study this matter, composed of the Licentiate Luis de Salcedo, member of the Council and Chamber of His Majesty (*Consejo y Cámara de Su Majestad*), the Licentiates Don Francisco de Tejada and Don García Pérez de Araciél, both members of the Council of His Majesty, and the Licentiates Juan González de Solórzano, Don Rodrigo de Aguiar y Acuña, and Alonso Maldonado de Torres, all members of the Council of the Indies, submitted their

resolution to the king,⁶⁸ which was reduced to two main points, of which: “one is the new construction and introduction of the mint in Santa Fe del Nuevo Reino, and the other, the consumption of the *plata corriente* in Cartagena and the manufacture of the coinage of enriched billon.”⁶⁹

Although they declare that it is the opinion of the Licentiates Don Rodrigo de Aguiar y Acuña, and Alonso Maldonado de Torres, that the 60,000 ducats of enriched billon coinage should be made so that they circulate in that territory, along with the provinces of Santa Marta, Venezuela and Cumaná, it was the opinion of the rest of Commission that for many and potent reasons that were offered, that under no circumstances was it convenient that this coinage should be made. Being thus, it was said that the members of the Commission “conclude, that it is not convenient in their opinion, that this coinage be made, and that if any of it was already minted, that it be unmade and melted, so that no trace of it should remain.”⁷⁰

By the same token, it was the opinion of this Commission, that if the mint were not yet commenced, that it should not be erected, and if it was, that it should be suspended.

With this result, by a decree of March 26, 1622,⁷¹ the king now passes this matter on to his Council of the Indies, so they could again discuss matters relating to the manufacture of coinage in the New Kingdom of Granada, and especially in Cartagena. On March 30th the Council gathers together,⁷² with the following members present: Juan González de Solórzano, Don Francisco Manso de Zúñiga, Don Pedro de Vivanco y Villagómez, Marcos de Torres, Don Rodrigo de Aguiar, Alonso Maldonado de Torres, Diego Lucio Lucero, and Sancho Flores. The deliberations continued until April 8, 1622, when the Council finally was able to send their opinion to the King.⁷³ Although in reality, this opinion showed that the Counselors were divided on this matter.

On the one hand, the Licentiates Juan González de Solórzano, Don Francisco Manso de Zúñiga, Don Pedro de Vivanco y Villagómez, and Marcos de Torres, were of the opinion that, although there had been a petition made on the part of Cartagena that they should be given minor coinage to replace the *plata corriente*, they had not asked that this coinage be of billon. Therefore, it was their opinion that His Majesty should order that all should halt until the provinces and parties interested in the damages and benefits of the creation of the billon coinage should be heard and summoned [to be heard]. Moreover, it was their opinion that not only should the interested parties of the province of Cartagena and those in charge of making these coins be summoned, but also those of all the provinces of the Indies, viceroys, prelates, Audiencias, ecclesiastic and secular town Councils, governors and Royal officials of His Majesty, since all of them would be affected by the new introduction of this coinage to those parties and the good or bad example that of its effect should result. With this opinion they said that, in this manner, all conveniences and inconveniences that might result having been heard, His Majesty could take the resolution that he felt best to his service.

These officials, taking into account the importance of the matter, asked that in the interim the construction of these mints should cease and be suspended, and if they had already been erected, all the coins of enriched billon that might have been made and placed in circulation should be withdrawn, since the harm that could follow, and the interest that could be lost, from detaining the labor for one or two years would not be considerable, in comparison with what would result if the resolution was to be wrong.

On the other hand, the Licentiates Don Rodrigo de Aguiar, Alonso Maldonado de Torres, Diego Lucio Lucero, and Sancho Flores were of the opinion that, to avoid in the Nuevo Reino de Granada and the provinces of Cartagena, Santa Marta and Cumaná the great damages, inconveniences and fraud that followed from the continued use of the *plata corriente*, the aforesaid Nuevo Reino and its provinces should be given struck coinage with the royal arms, in the form and quantity that the council had already previously determined and for which they had already counseled the previous King Phillip III, who had approved and decreed, and for which an agreement had been reached with Captain Turrillo. Moreover, they based their opinion on that, after the Audiencia of Santa Fe had heard the parties in contradictory suit, they had still admitted and approved it.

As far as the mint that was to be constructed in the New Kingdom of Granada, it was the opinion of these other officials that if it were not yet constructed, or if it was not in a condition to produce coinage in it, then its construction should cease until the Audiencia could send a report on what duration and perpetuity it could have, coining silver, as well as how many marks could be produced every year, in order to thereby be able to determine for how long the production and officials in it could be sustained. With this they asked that for now only the 60,000 ducats of enriched billon and the coinage of silver that might be made, but not in escudos nor other coins of gold, for the inconveniences that had been considered from the ease with which it could be brought to Spain without registration.

With the change of opinion of some of his counselors concerning the enriched billon coinage, and now even the gold coinage, the king, on May 23, 1622, decides to send a new resolution to the Audiencia in Santa Fe.⁷⁴ In this resolution, it was decreed and resolved that to avoid the great damage, inconvenience and frauds that were perceived from the use of the *plata corriente* in that Kingdom and in the provinces of Cartagena, Santa Marta and Cumaná, it was determined that it should be consumed and reduced, making in its place coins with the Royal arms for trade and commerce, with just the agreed-upon 60,000 ducats of enriched billon, and no more for now, and silver coins so that there would be some of those in that Kingdom, the province of Cartagena and remaining areas of the districts of that governorate. Lastly, and counter [to his previous orders] he now ordered that no escudos nor other gold coins be minted, suspending thus this part of the accord reached with Captain Turrillo. Just as had been said by his Commission, the explanation now given for the cancellation of the gold was that this was being done due to the inconveniences that had been considered [resulting from] the ease with which unregistered gold coins could be brought to Spain, along with other inconveniences that had been presented.

But this still did not affect Turrillo, who near the end of 1621 had departed for Santa Fe with his officials and other appurtenances. The journey from Cartagena to Santa Fe was longer than that from Santa Fe to Cartagena, and even sometimes longer than from Cartagena to Spain. On this trip Turrillo carried along a great number of officials, personal effects, tools and instruments for the manufacture of coinage, including his presses and equipment for the manufacture of enriched billon coinage, and other things. This cargo being extremely large, it would have been transported from Cartagena to Bocas de Cenizo (the mouth of the Magdalena River) by sea, until arriving at Barranca de Mateo y del Rey (Calamar). At Barranca de Mateo large vessels with flat bottoms were chartered to travel from there to Santa Cruz de Mompox. Once at Mompox, the

necessary amount of time had to pass to assemble a flotilla of canoes for the voyage to Honda. This being the most dangerous part of the journey, it was done in a defensive manner to guard against possible attacks from the Indians. Upon arrival at Honda, the equipment was transferred to mules, who transported it via caravan to the city of Santa Fe. In the norm, this voyage lasted between 60 and 75 days, and not less than 45, if were done as fast as possible.⁷⁵ Therefore, and knowing that Turrillo was already in Santa Fe on February 15, 1622, as we shall see, then his departure from Cartagena could not have taken place later than sometime in December of 1621.

Upon his arrival in Santa Fe, Turrillo took possession of a principal house where he fabricated a smelter and ovens, and erected the other necessary offices, placing in them the tools and instruments necessary to make coins. It is there where the work to make gold and silver coins begins, which was done, according to Turrillo, “under watchful eyes” (*con vista de ojos*) of the President and *Oidores* (Judges) of the Audiencia.⁷⁶ Although the coining of gold and silver coins in Santa Fe in 1622 was witnessed by two witnesses of the time, these being the chronicler Brother Pedro Simón⁷⁷ and the Scribe Estacio Sanguino Rangel,⁷⁸ this was mostly refuted until the decade of 1980, when examples of these coins were found among the remains of the galleons *Santa Margarita* and *Nuestra Señora de Atocha*, sunk off the coasts of Florida in that same year of 1622. This discovery removed all doubt from this historical fact.

If the Audiencia approved the house that Turrillo had selected and adapted to serve as a temporary mint, as Turrillo said, it was clear that they only did this while the mint that he had committed to build was being constructed. On February 15, 1622 the Audiencia delivered to Turrillo a judicial decree permitting him to begin erecting the new mint that was to be constructed according to the plans that had been agreed. But, although Turrillo indicated a site to erect it, this was not approved. Therefore, on April 12, 1622, the President and Judges of the Audiencia indicated a new site, which, having been seen by Turrillo, he said he had found satisfactory.⁷⁹

On that same day, knowing that Captain Alonso Turrillo de Yebra had only struck gold and silver coins (not in that exact order), he was notified by petition of the Prosecutor (*Fiscal*) of the Audiencia, the Licentiate Antonio de Quiroga, that soon, and without any delay, he should comply with the tenor of the judicial decrees of approval and review that had been issued concerning the coinage of enriched billon in that city, as well as that of Cartagena. However, this request does not give faster movement to the matter. Before attempting to fabricate this coinage, Turrillo first sends a request to the Audiencia asking them that, to ensure the coinage would not be rejected, they publish a judicial decree declaring that grave penalties would be imposed upon any persons who refused to receive them, once placed in circulation.

On May 12, 1622 the members of the Audiencia convened, these being: the Governor and Captain General of the New Kingdom of Granada and President of the Royal Audiencia, Don Juan de Borja, Knight of the Order of St. James (*Santiago*), and the *Oidores* (Judges): the Licentiate Don Francisco de Herrera Campuzano, Doctor Lesmes de Espinosa Saravia, the Licentiate Antonio de Ovando and the Doctor Don Francisco de Sosa. Having seen what was asked for by Captain Alonso Turrillo de Yebra, Treasurer of the Mint, they said “*that they commanded and ordered to be proclaimed and published in this city and other places convenient that any and all persons of any estate and condition receive The coin of Enriched billon that is ordered to be Minted by the said captain Alonso turrillo for the value of said coin and with it*

trade and make commerce in all the district of that Royal audiencia, as is done with the Royal gold ~~and~~ silver with the understanding that not obeying and complying with the above will be thus punished with Rigor."⁸⁰

With this provided, on May 13, 1622 it is ordered that the judicial decree be pronounced and published, being witnesses the Licenciado Gerónimo Serrano de Ávila, Reader (*Relator*), and Tomás Velásquez, Scribe of the King's Chamber (*Cámara del Rey*). What had been agreed was also notified to Juan Ibáñez, Attorney General (*Procurador General*) of the City Council (*Cabildo*) of Santa Fe, by Hernando de Angulo Velasco, Scribe of the Royal Audiencia of that city.

On May 19, 1622, in the public plaza, pounding drums and blowing trumpets, the judicial decree for the use of the cuartillo coins was proclaimed in loud and clear voice by Diego Ruiz, Public Crier. To this act Juan Vizcaíno, Don Gonzalo de Cárdenas, Lucas de Santiago, and many other persons were witnesses.

Having been proclaimed with all solemnity in Santa Fe the use of that coinage, Turrillo began coining it in that city. But only very few managed to be placed in circulation, since as soon as the task of minting them began, they were rejected by the merchants of Santa Fe, who, ignoring the threat of punishment expressed in the judicial decree of the Audiencia, said that nobody "was enough" to obligate the people to accept them.⁸¹

Under this new obstacle, and with the excuse that it was in Cartagena where the greatest need was for the consumption of the *plata correinte* and introduction of coinage, Turrillo now returns to that city, taking with him his officials and equipment to manufacture coinage. Upon his arrival, Turrillo immediately presented to the governor the new orders he had received in Santa Fe, including one dispatched by the Audiencia on May 28, 1622, just a few days before departing Santa Fe for Cartagena, including the order that was to be observed with the introduction of enriched billon coinage that was to be made in Cartagena.⁸² But the governor was unmovable in his cause, and, according to Turrillo, answered him that "as long as he governed, the said coinage of cuartillos was not to be minted, even if was to bring twelve decrees from His Majesty."⁸³

With the excessive expenses and damages he was undertaking, and the delay that resulted from awaiting replies from the Kingdoms of Spain, Turrillo finally decides to make the journey back to Spain, to be able to give account to His Majesty in person. Rapidly he began to make the preparations to travel on the Tierra Firme Fleet under the command of General Don Juan de Lara Morán, whose arrival was expected soon. On July 27, 1622 this fleet arrived at Cartagena, coming from Portobelo in Panama, under protection of the Royal Armada of the Guard (*Armada de la Guarda de la Carrera de Indias*), under the command of Captain General Don Lope Díaz de Almendáriz, Marquis of Cadereyta.

On July 30, 1622, while the galleons were being loaded for their next departure, Alonso Turrillo de Yebra presented himself before Alonso de la Fuente, Scribe of the Governorship and Public, and the witnesses Don Antonio Arias de la Rúa, Juan de Tejada and Gonzalo Gómez, residents in that city of Cartagena, to name his Treasurer. On that day Turrillo leaves a declaration that, by reason of his departure for the Kingdoms of Spain, and since he could perish on the voyage, he was then leaving word that should such occur, he was substituting the mercy that His Majesty had made on him of the title of Treasurer upon Doña María de Vergara y Azcarate, his wife, and in

the event of her death upon Doña María Turrillo, his daughter, or, in the event of both their deaths, upon the person they should name, supplicating His Majesty to confirm this mercy.⁸⁴

Having left everything in the hands of his wife, Turrillo departs the port of Cartagena on the fleet on August 3, 1622, arriving at the port of Havana in Cuba on August 22nd. On September 3rd, Turrillo was able to write to the king from Havana, notifying him that upon his arrival he had received copy of the decree sent to the Royal Audiencia of Santa Fe, so that, in conformity of the king, the Governor of Cartagena not impede the manufacture of the coinage of enriched billon, with the warning that the governor would be charged from his person and belongings all the damages and losses. But, although Turrillo says that he thought that this could oblige him to return to Cartagena to put the coinage in execution, he would not do it, since the rebellion he had seen in Girón was sufficient, and who, according to Turrillo had said that no order would make him change his position.⁸⁵

In this letter of September 3rd, Turrillo took advantage of his missive to ask the king that a great demonstration be made to the governorate, supplicating that the Audiencia not be allowed to refrain from sending a judge to Cartagena, or that the case be remitted to Licentiate Don Diego de Medina Rosales, “visitator”¹ who found himself in the city of Cartagena at the moment, so that the excesses that had already been mentioned should be punished and to ensure that the Royal Orders would be put in execution. With this Turrillo wanted to ensure that there would be no further obstacles, since he said that, upon his return to Cartagena from Spain, which he intended to do on the first galleons available, he would take with him the copper, which he had been allowed to purchase in Cuba, and other necessary materials to manufacture the enriched billon coinage, and any difficulty that he might there encounter upon his arrival would be much to His Majesty’s damage and prejudice.

Continuing his voyage, he left the port of Havana with the fleet on September 4, 1622.⁸⁶ The next day, the caravan of ships, composed of around 30 vessels, found itself near the Isle of Tortuga and Bajos de los Mártires, in the Channel of the Bahamas, when it was struck by a violent hurricane, which continued until September 6th. After the hurricane, a great devastation was perceived. Between the 10th and 14th of September there arrived at the port of Havana those ships which, though badly damaged, had saved

1 A judge, prosecutor or minister of the law, charged with a mission of inspection and audit, in representation of the higher authority that sent him; this envoy frequently came with plenipotentiary powers to exercise justice and impose the rule of law, with immunity from prosecution by the local authorities; he most often was sent by the authorities in Spain to the colonies, or by the viceroy to the provinces, to investigate matters where suspicion existed that the royal interests or authority were being harmed or injured, empowering the visitator to correct the situation and castigate those guilty of the misdeeds. The visitator’s mission or visit of inspection may be referred to as a *visitation*.

The term *visitator* is rare in the English language, being absent from most English dictionaries, although it is of course to be found in the Oxford English Dictionary. It was more commonly used in the 18th Century (as was its Spanish equivalent “*visitador*”, although the latter is more common in modern Spanish than its counterpart is in modern English). For a good example of modern usage of the term visitator in the English language, see Peter Bakewell, *Silver and Entrepreneurship in Seventeenth-Century Potosí. The Life and Times of Antonio López de Quiroga*, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 1988, pp. 39, 42, et. al.

themselves, bringing with them many survivors from the other ships that had not been so fortunate. On September 15th, a list could be made which included eight as the number of ships that had been lost or of which no news was had (this last being the case when a ship was lost without survivors and nobody had seen what had happened).⁸⁷ Turrillo survived this disaster. However, according to what he would say when he arrived in Spain in 1623, part of what he was bringing for his expenses had been lost in one of the galleons that had sunk, and what had escaped he had to spend in Havana at his return.⁸⁸

Arriving in Spain, upon learning of the new resolution of the king in which the coinage of gold was forbidden in the New Kingdom of Granada, he hands a testimonial to the king, referring to the damages and inconveniences that would follow if this gold were not coined. The king, by decree of October 23, 1623 orders that this be seen in the Council.⁸⁹

After having seen this testimonial, the members of the Council said that, considering the causes previously presented to obligate the suspension of the manufacture of gold [coins], and recognizing that now commerce did occur with this metal in the Nuevo Reino, which in part was brought in pieces, some even without being assayed or tax-stamped, which they called of 13 carats for seeming to be of this fineness, on January 26, 1624 they declared that it was now the opinion of the Council that it was not of lesser utility that gold be minted, but in fact even greater than that of silver, and therefore, it would indeed be convenient that it be made into coins. According to the Council, having coin of fineness and weight certain, and of small denominations for daily commerce would remedy all this, including the continuing use of gold in dust, which was considered even worse than that of gold in pieces.⁹⁰

A few days before the king received the above-mentioned resolution, the monarch, via “a paper sealed by his Royal hand” dated January 15, 1624,⁹¹ had ordered to convene a special commission to convene, so they could see the queries, papers and ideas concerning the mint and the work therein in the New Kingdom of Granada and province of Cartagena. In obedience of this order, there participated in this Commission the Presidents of the Councils of the Indies and of Commerce, besides the Licentiates Don Rodrigo de Aguiar, Alonso Maldonado de Torres, and Sancho Flores, members of the Council of the Indies; Don Pedro Mesía de Tovar, Juan de Gamboa, and Miguel de Ipinarieta, members of the Council of Commerce; and later, even Captain Diego Matute,⁹² *Regidor* (Councilman) of Cartagena would be incorporated, as he was en route to Spain as Attorney General (*Procurador General*) of Cartagena to confer on another matter,⁹³ and would now serve as representative of that city in the matter of the contradiction there was in [reference to] the coinage of enriched billon and the consumption of the *plata corriente*.

Although there is no information about the initial deliberations in which Matute was not yet present, it is evident that by March 1624 it was believed that the project could be restarted, keeping the enriched billon coinage with the metallic composition originally decreed, and stipulating that only the quantity of 60,000 ducats be struck, as had already been decreed by the Audiencia of Santa Fe. Being thus, on March 14, 1624 a great number of new orders are signed, with the intention of once again putting this project in motion. Among these orders we find the following:

- One sent to the President and *Oidores* (Judges) of the Audiencia of Santa Fe, ordering that the 60,000 ducats of enriched billon coinage to be struck in the city of Cartagena be distributed among the provinces of Cartagena and Santa Marta in the quantities they felt deemed best.⁹⁴
- Another to Alonso Turrillo de Yebra, which said that since he had notified that some of the officials and coiners he had taken to Cartagena to make the coins had retired to other occupations due to the contradictions and impediments that were imposed in the execution of their jobs, the king was giving him a decree to obligate them to return to the manufacture of the coinage, as they were obliged to do. This [order] also permitted him, in the event the aforementioned officials and coiners excused themselves from returning, to embark and return them to Spain, replacing them with others in their places.⁹⁵
- Another to the President and *Oidores* (Judges) of the Audiencia of Santa Fe, and to the Governor of Cartagena, present or future, telling them that since Captain Turrillo had made an account to the king of the great amount of time that had passed without him being able to put into service his mint due to the obstacles imposed by the cities of Cartagena and Santa Fe, he had supplicated that this be taken into consideration, and that the aforesaid 15 years that he was to have the mint under his control by the agreement of 1620 run from the day coinage would actually start to be made in the city of Cartagena. To this the king says that having it for good, he declared and ordered that it be done.⁹⁶
- Another to Juan de Eguiluz, Accountant of the Royal Treasury of the Island of Cuba, letting him know that the quantity of enriched billon coinage to be made had been moderated, and that therefore it was now the opinion of Captain Turrillo that it would be sufficient to his needs with only 200 quintals of copper, instead of the 400 initially stipulated. Therefore, it was requested that he be given these just this once, and no more, given that the mint at Santa Fe, in the event it was erected, would not need copper, since only coinage of silver and gold would be made therein, if the license for that was to be issued.⁹⁷
- Another to the Governor of Cartagena with the specifics that were to be observed. In this decree, it was ordered that the Royal officials receive into the Royal Treasury 8,000 ducats of the aforementioned coins of billon, returning them to Captain Alonso Turrillo in silver or gold of the [proper] fineness, that were to remain in that province and were not destined to be shipped to Spain, distributing that amount in the disbursements to be made by the aforesaid Treasury. And having manufactured up to 4,000 ducats of the aforesaid coinage, the use of *plata corriente* would be prohibited in that province, and once 10,000 ducats were made, then the use and commerce of *plata corriente* would be generally forbidden in the entire governorate. And that all this be executed without obstacle or hindrance of any kind.⁹⁸
- Another to the President and Judges of the House of Trade in Seville, letting them know that Captain Turrillo had made an account that of the officials and coiners that he was going to take in 1621, 11 had been left behind, which he now had a need to embark. Therefore, it was ordered that they allow Turrillo to take those 11 officials and moneyers in the charter vessel he had been granted.⁹⁹

- Another to the President and Judges of the Board of Trade in Seville giving an order to release the grant of permitted goods. In this [order] it was reminded that Turrillo had authorization to transport from these Kingdoms, in each one of the 15 years that he was administrator of the mint, free of all freight duties and import and export duties in Spain as well as in the Indies, 1,000 ducats of wine and oil, for the sustenance and entertainment of his officials and coiners, and 300 quintals of iron and steel, by half, for the manufacture of instruments. In this manner, he had been granted a charter vessel in 1623. But, now, having been reviewed by the Council of the Indies, and by reason of information received from House of Trade according to letters of November 11, 1623 and January 16, 1624, they gave the order that for 1625 and onwards, throughout the 15 years, these permitted goods of wine, oil, iron and steel be transported in the galleons of the Armada of the Guard (*Armada de la Guarda de la Carrera de Indias*), or in the Capitana or Almirana vessels of the fleets headed to the province of Tierra Firme, distributing it among these vessels. Being that no permitted goods were carried in 1624, these would be transported along with those of 1625.¹⁰⁰
- Another sent to the President and *Oidores* (Judges) of the Audiencia of Santa Fe, letting them know that the king had agreed and resolved that, the contradictions notwithstanding, all [the provisions] contained in his last decree sent May 23, 1622 were to be observed, obeyed and executed, wherein he ordered that the 60,000 ducats of enriched billon coinage be minted at Cartagena, without regard to any contradiction that might be alleged by the aforesaid city and its province, even were it with new reasons and protests made after its date. This provision now contained a strong admonition for the Governor of Cartagena, telling him that if he did not obey it and execute it, he would be condemned with 4,000 ducats, besides the other punishments that would be decided for his disobedience, plus the expenses that Captain Turrillo would have incurred in this matter.¹⁰¹
- Another sent to the President and *Oidores* (Judges) of the Audiencia of Santa Fe, advising them that Captain Alonso Turrillo had presented himself in his Court, and that it had been ordered that he be helped with the amount the aforesaid had charged the said his recipient of his wages and salary since April 1, 1620 until the end of the year of 1623, he ordered them that if they had also paid from his treasury, by virtue of the agreement made with him, this amount be discounted from the payments they were to make to him in the future.¹⁰²
- Another to Don Francisco Vanegas, Governor and Captain General of the Island of Cuba and city of San Cristóbal de la Habana [Saint Christopher of Havana], or to the person in whose charge the government may lay, with the same orders that had been sent to Accountant Juan de Eguiluz, to give the copper to Turrillo (or to his representative), to obligate him to do so.¹⁰³
- Another to Don García Girón, Governor and Captain General of the province of Cartagena, or to the person in whose charge the government may lay, telling him to not impede the manufacture in that city of the 60,000 ducats of coins of enriched billon, observing, obeying and executing all that contained in his last

decree of May 23, 1622 without regard to any contradiction that might be alleged by the aforesaid city and its province. This, even were it with new reasons and protests made after the date of this decree. This provision, as it was notified to the Audiencia of Santa Fe, was the one in which this governor was warned that if he did not obey and execute it, he would be condemned with 4,000 ducats, besides the other punishments that they would decide to impose for his disobedience, and the expenses that Captain Turrillo would have had in this matter.¹⁰⁴

But, upon the arrival of Captain Diego Matute to Spain, he handed in a new proposal in which, although they resigned themselves to accept a billon coinage, they did not do so with the enriched billon alloying of four parts of copper to one of silver of 11 deniers and 4 grains of fineness, as had originally been agreed, but rather a new alloy of three parts of copper to one of fine silver of total fineness of 2,380 maravedís. In addition, it was now proposed that coinage be made with this alloy in other denominations, besides the cuartillos already authorized, for which, given that this proposal had to be submitted for discussions again, it was necessary to postpone what had already been agreed in March.

On August 10, 1624, to be able to continue studying this matter, an order was sent to the Treasurer of one of the mints of Spain,¹⁰⁵ which surely must have been that of Madrid, ordering him to give to Captains Alonso Turrillo and Diego Matute, the piles, trussels, and other instruments that might be necessary, to make the samples of the new coinage that the king held had agreed should be made; being this a new coinage that was being tried out.

Having made the trials of the new coins, it must have been now that Turrillo furnished a report wherein he detailed his objection to what Matute was proposing, besides presenting in it other damages and losses that he had undergone due to the change in the coinage. In this report, Turrillo now says that:

*“The aforesaid contract he took, based on an ingenuity that with his industry he built, with which he was to manufacture the aforesaid coins of cuartillos, because of it being small and easy to fasten to the impression of the dies with a wheel, which had to be moved with very little water or sangre [beast power such as horse or ox—Ed.], and this would excuse him the rights of the third part of the minting officials in the aforesaid low coinage, which amount to one hundred and twenty thousand reales. And this profit was so certain, that only by the license of the use of the aforesaid mill, did it serve Your Majesty with five percent, as is indicated by the contract. And today ceases this benefit, because the coinage that is ordered to be made is of greater body and in it will be found sufficient resistance by the force of the said mill to not to be able to have effect [effective strikings].”*¹⁰⁶

On September 14, 1624, having met several times, the members of the special commission called together by order of the king since January 1624, finally sent their findings to the king, letting him know that the entire matter had been reduced to five points, of which, this was their opinion:¹⁰⁷

1. Over whether the mint should be founded and erected in the city of Santa Fe in the New Kingdom of Granada, they said that, considering the quantity of silver that was extracted from the mines in all that territory it was not sufficient to sustain so

- great a machine, that it should be reduced to such moderation as would correspond to the silver extracted from those mines, since that way it could last and be built, extending thus the coinage to ordinary trade and commerce in that province and the adjacent.
2. Over whether in addition to the manufacture of the aforementioned coinage, also eight, four, two, one, and half reales should be made, in accordance with the previously stipulated, as well as gold in two and one escudos, they state that, this having been such a controversial topic, they had passed it to the Council of the Indies, who had furnished a report, in which they referred to the conveniences that would result from this manufacture. In accordance with this determination, it was the opinion of the Commission that it was indeed justified. And thus, in regard to this and the manufacture of silver coins, it was their recommendation that the agreed-upon should indeed be observed and realized, depending upon the king's will as to how long such manufacture should last, if it were agreeable to him, and dependent upon the quantity of silver and gold that would continue to be extracted, and upon what experience would show, to determine in reality what should be done.
 3. Over what concerned the manufacture of billon coinage, they said that the major contradiction had come from the part of the province of Cartagena, it being that the agreement that had been concluded with Captain Turrillo stipulated that 300,000 ducats of that coinage be manufactured, alloyed at four marks of copper and one of silver. To contain this, the Audiencia of Santa Fe had moderated this quantity, ordering that only 60,000 ducats could be made, and the king had approved this afterward. Nevertheless, having Captain Diego Matute come to these Kingdoms, a different course had been taken that seemed better to the Commission, this being that in order to consume the *plata corriente*, cuartillos, half reales and reales of *plata baja* (low-fineness silver) should be made, alloying 10 ounces of fine silver of complete fineness of 2,380 maravedís, with 30 of copper, and that of this mixture, which was to consist of a fourth part of fine silver of complete fineness, the aforementioned coins should be made, up to the quantity of 60,000 ducats, extracting from every mark 25 one real coins, 50 halves or 100 cuartillos. It was estimated that this coinage would produce a profit for the Royal Treasury, including the cost of its manufacture, of some 16%, or somewhat more.
 4. Over what concerned the adjustment to the account that Captain Alonso Turrillo had said about the damages and losses that had followed from the innovations to the enriched billon coinage, it is declared that this was justified and that compensation should be made to him.
 5. Lastly, on what touched upon the manufacture of enriched billon coinage, whether a facility should be established in Cartagena, to manufacture in it up to the aforementioned 60,000 ducats, they say yes, but that it should be affiliated to that of Santa Fe. It was also the opinion of the Commission in respect to the ministers and officials of the permanent mint in Santa Fe and the temporary one in Cartagena, that the number of these should be reduced to just the minimum number deemed indispensable. Thus, given that these ought to be somewhat fewer in number than those of the others in the Kingdom, once the time period of the

agreement with Captain Alonso Turrillo passed and these remained to His Majesty, his costs would be less than what they would be with the great number that was ordered and determined by the regulations of the mints.

With the resolution taken by the Commission being accepted by the king, the project could now proceed. Being thus, that same month of September, we see a report admitted to the Council of the Indies by Turrillo, in which he said that awaiting that His Majesty take a decision over the matters relating to the manufacture of coins in the aforementioned mint, he had been obligated to remain in these Kingdoms that year of 1624, for which he asked that he be paid his wages and salary for that present year of 1624, since his need was such that he could not continue without availing himself of it. In response to this request, the king ordered the Receiver (*Receptor*) of the Council, Diego de Vergara, to pay him, from then through the end of the year, the amount solicited by the Captain.¹⁰⁸ With this done, a missive is sent to the officials of the Royal Treasury of the city of Santa Fe to inform them that Captain Turrillo's salary had been paid to him in Spain, so that this would be deducted from any payments that were to be made to him in the future.¹⁰⁹

Starting the year 1625, the proclamation of the new order was still awaited, which would now include the changes already agreed, to thus be able to initiate the minting of coins in Santa Fe and Cartagena. But this did not interrupt the commencement of preparations for the departure of Turrillo and his officials for the New Kingdom of Granada. On January 14, 1625 Turrillo writes a letter to the king, in which he asks him to authorize him to carry the permitted grant of wine, oil, iron and steel, which was to be shipped in one of the galleons of the Royal Armada (*Armada de la Guarda de la Carrera de Indias*), in a separate vessel of 80 tons, which would sail under the care of those galleons. On February 21st the king grants him this petition.¹¹⁰

Finally, on March 10, 1625, the king finally [*sic*: redundancy is literal –*transl.*] signs the new order for the manufacture of the coinage in the New Kingdom of Granada, this, as expected, including, in nearly identical form, all that had been recommended by the Commission on September 14, 1624.¹¹¹ Being thus, the coinage of gold is again authorized, and the coining of the 60,000 ducats of billon coins is provided for, utilizing a new alloy of copper with silver that would be called “*plata baja*” [low silver]. This is decreed as follows:

“~ that in place of the coinage of Enriched Billon that was agreed it be made Alloyed to four marks of silver One of Copper for the trade and minor commerce of those Provinces and consumption of the plata corriente be made cuartillos half Reales and single Reales of plata baja alloying ten ounces of fine silver of total fineness of two thousand three hundred and eighty with thirty of copper and of this mixture which is to have one fourth part silver of total fineness and three fourths part of copper be made the aforesaid coins Up To a Quantity of sixty thousand ducats taking from Each mark of weight of this fineness Twenty and five single Reales fifty halves and hundred cuartillos in which shall be considered and shall be Earned for my Royal Treasury and costs of the labor to the amount of sixteen per cent something more.”¹¹²

On that same day, March 10th, another order is issued, directed to the officials of the Royal Treasury of the cities of Santa Fe and Cartagena, in which they were told that they were being ordered to give satisfaction and reimbursement to Turrillo for the advantages [profits] that were being taken away from him with the alteration in the

billon coinage, that he would be subjected to with the machine that he had invented to manufacture it, and the damages and costs that he had undergone due to the impediments placed in his way in the execution of his rights under the agreement. This recompense, which had been approved by the Commission, and which now was substantiated by calculations made by some of the Royal accountants consulted, held it for good that he be awarded 12,000 ducats, for once, which were to be paid from the profits resulting to the Royal Treasury from the manufacture of the aforementioned coinage.¹¹³

Although Captain Turrillo had requested permission to use a ship of 80 tons, the displacement of this vessel would be registered as 117 tons at the time of the voyage, this being the *Nuestra Señora de los Reyes* under ship's Master Marcos de Urquiza.¹¹⁴ Turrillo, together with his officials, sails on this vessel, departing the port of Cádiz with the galleons of the Armada under General Lope Díez de Armendáriz, Marquis of Cadereyta, en route to Cartagena of the Indies, between April 28 and 29, 1625.¹¹⁵ With Don García Girón having already served in the post of Governor and Captain General of the province of Cartagena for six years, he was replaced that year, and the new Governor, Diego de Escobar, who received his entitlement February 21, 1625,¹¹⁶ also travelled in this fleet.

According to documents from the House of Trade, the journey from Spain to Cartagena lasted 54 days, for which the fleet must have arrived in or around June 21, 1625.¹¹⁷ Arriving at the port of Cartagena, Turrillo went before the new Governor, Diego de Escobar, who already found himself in the midst of the change of command with Girón, and presented him with the new decrees for the manufacture of the authorized quantity of ducats of the new coinage of *plata baja*¹¹⁸ (which would continue to be called enriched billon coinage in Cartagena). In accordance with what Escobar would say in a letter of July 30, 1625, these decrees were being obeyed and complied with as would be substantiated by the collected proceeds he would send to the Council.

But the obedience expressed by the governor before the Royal decrees did not mean that he was in agreement with them. In that same letter of July 1625, the governor expressed to His Majesty that the city and province experienced great damages, and that all the convents and rich men and poor men felt the harm that was to occur from the manufacture of the coinage of *plata baja*. Therefore, while they were striking and manufacturing of the coins that His Majesty ordered continued, they desired to be heard and that the mercy be done of ordering that the *plata baja* that was being made be recalled, be smelted, and in its place half reales and reales be made, out of silver equal to that being made in Perú and Mexico. Desiring to give their petition more weight, an offer was made to the king, on the part of Cartagena, to donate “30U (30,000) *Reales of eight* [8 Reales coins] *for this mercy to be granted and* 10U (10,000) *Pesos of eight reales additional as excise tax and gift.*”¹¹⁹

Although this communication gave the impression that Turrillo could already be making the *plata baja* coins in Cartagena, this was not the case. What is in fact possible is that the evidence of the harm could have been observed from what already occurred in Santa Fe in 1622, where a small quantity of enriched billon was made and put into circulation. According to what can be deduced from the account books of the mint of Cartagena, by this date Turrillo was still making the necessary preparations to begin manufacturing coins in this mint, and the principal interest seemed to be in the striking of silver coins.

The mint finally opened its doors on October 1, 1625, this being the day that the first *partida*² of silver was received. The first *partida* of gold would not be received until December 19, 1625. In total, by January 26, 1626, 19 *partidas* of silver and three of gold had been received, when the first *partida* of metal to make *plata baja* coins was received, which would have commenced to be made on that same day.

Back in Spain, the king receives the letter already mentioned from the Governor of Cartagena from July 30, 1625, with which a report must have been included, since it is known that, by decree of February 11, 1626, the king sends this report to the Council of the Indies so that they could revisit this matter.

From what the documentation tells us, we can deduce that the content of the report that was sent to the Council was very similar to that contained in the letter of the governor, although much more detailed. This report stated that the damages from the manufacture of *plata baja* coinage were already evident, since, from not having any value nor circulation in any other place, it rendered it an impossibility for the city of Cartagena and its province to use it anywhere else to supply itself with provisions for its citizens, for the armada and for the galleons that went there, and of other things that came from outside. Besides, it stated that in the exchange of this coinage for that of silver 30% was lost, and with the large profit that foreigners could reap by manufacturing it outside and introducing it, the damages would grow. It was for all these that they supplicated that His Majesty order its manufacture to cease, that it be collected and consumed, and that it not be permitted to circulate or be used, making in its place coins of refined silver, in half reales and reales, of the same fineness and form as those being made in the Kingdoms of Perú and New Spain, for the common use and small change of that land.

According to them, due to the inconveniences mentioned in the report, and others that could result from delay, the city of Cartagena offered to serve His Majesty with 30,000 pesos in eight reales in recompense, and another 10,000 pesos of eight reales by way of a donation, in place of “an assessment of duty or excise tax” which by order of the king had been ordered in that governorship for help with the expenses that would be incurred in making the preparations and dispatch of the Armada which was to sail to the South Sea.¹²⁰

On April 14, 1626, the Council, having recognized all the facts presented in the papers on the matter, and with consultations and decrees granted lengthily discussed overall, responds that, being that in continuing with the manufacture of the coinage of *plata baja* the damages and inconveniences were recognized, which would every day increase were this coinage to continue, then it was convenient, as ought to be ordered by His Majesty, that the manufacture of *plata baja* cease, and that that which already had been made be consumed. Being thus, it was their opinion that in its place coins of

² *Translator's note:* “Partida” is the entire process of the coining of one type of metal, either gold or silver (these two were never combined in a single *partida*), from the ingress of the metal into the mint until its delivery to its corresponding owners. This process involved the metal's receipt, manifestation, smelting, assaying, tax-stamping, preparation into planchets, striking, separation of amounts due for seigniorage and minting fees, and finally delivery, all controlled at every step as to quantity, quality, fineness, weight, and good order. (This definition is largely taken from the glossary of Carlos Jara's *The Early Coinage of the Mint of Santiago de Chile: 1749-1772*, Santiago, 2006.)

the same weight and fineness be made as were made in other parts of Spain and the Indies, this being the fineness law of 11 deniers and 4 grains, at 67 reales per mark, and that this be made in cuartillos for the common use. Thus, being made in sufficient quantities, all use of gold in dust and *plata corriente* would cease. Lastly, about the gift that the city of Cartagena offered, they said that, given that the reasons were true and of good government, they did not see it as justified and that it should therefore not be accepted, although, because it would be necessary to give satisfaction to Captain Turrillo, that the amount necessary to give satisfaction to those interested parties at the mint and elsewhere, could be accepted, to be employed in the expense that would have to be made to fence in and fortify Cartagena.¹²¹

The king approves the recommendations of the Council, although retaining the denominations he had already ordered for the *plata baja*. On August 24, 1626 the king sends a new decree to Diego de Escobar, his Governor in Cartagena, that upon receipt of this decree he should issue the order to cease the manufacture of *plata baja* that was being made by Captain Turrillo and that the one which was already made be consumed, making in its place coins of silver in reales, half reales, and cuartillos of the fineness of 11 deniers and 4 grains, made at 67 reales per mark, in quantities sufficient for the common use. It was also the responsibility of the governor that once sufficient coinage had been minted, that he see to it that trade in gold dust and *plata corriente* cease, for being inconvenient.¹²²

On October 27, 1626, the king sends another order to the President and *Oidores* (Judges) of his Royal Audiencia in Santa Fe, with which he includes the order he had sent to the Governor of Cartagena on August 24th, telling them that being that it was his will that the contents of the attached order be complied with, he was sending it [also] to them so that they could now see it, keep it, execute it and see to it that it was kept, complied with, and executed, in all and for all, exactly as per in it was contained and declared, not permitting that anything contrary to its contents be done.¹²³ It must be mentioned that given that the order sent to Cartagena on August 24, 1626 specifically said that they could only make coins in “quantity sufficient for the common use”, and the reales, half reales and cuartillos of the fineness of 11 deniers and 4 grains were the denominations for the “common use”, it was on the basis of this that the Audiencia would regulate the mintages in Cartagena in 1627, by which they were prohibited from striking any gold coins and silver coins in the denominations of eight, four, and two reales, until 1630; although this is an order that Cartagena never obeyed [as evidenced by extant coins—*Ed*].

Ending his order, the king tells the governor that concerning the gift of the 40,000 pesos that had been offered, he had resolved that it not be admitted, since the reasons offered by that city for seeking to cease the striking of *plata baja* were of good government. But, because it would be just and necessary to give satisfaction to the persons who found themselves with said coinage of *plata baja*, being that it was now ordered that it be collected and consumed, besides the satisfaction that would need to be given to Captain Turrillo, then it was ordered that the order be given that those 40,000 pesos be charged and collected and given to the Royal Treasury in Cartagena. That way, with those, it would be possible to begin giving satisfaction for the amounts necessary, and should anything be left over, that it be used to the benefit of the city, with the expense that needed to be made in fencing and fortifying it.

Meanwhile, according to the books of the mint in Cartagena, between January 26 and March 24, 1626, 2,128 marks and 4 ounces of metal to make the coinage of *plata baja* was received, from which were deducted 240 marks and 1 ounce of scrap [*cizalla* = *fragments and shavings of metal, or the scrap remaining after the planchets have been cut from the bar or sheet of metal.* –transl.] and 35 marks and 5 ounces of “*poldra*” [Note: No translation or definition could be found for this term. –transl.] Of these remained 1,852 marks and 4 *ochavas* [an “*ochava*” is a 1/8 part of an ounce of silver –transl.] of which 1,842 marks and 4 *ochavas* were turned in for coining. According to the account book of the Treasurer, of these 1,842 marks and 4 *ochavas*, 1,731 marks came to be coined, at 25 reales per mark, producing 5,409 pesos and 3 reales in coins. The intrinsic value of the metal used for this mintage was: 3,786 pesos and 4 reales of copper and 1,622 pesos, 6 reales, 32 maravedís of fine silver.¹²⁴

Being that Cartagena continued using the old term *vellón rico* “enriched billon” for the new coin of “*plata baja*”, this has caused certain confusion among researchers, which has resulted in that many modern writings cite this figure of 5,409 pesos and 3 reales as the quantity of coins of enriched billon struck in 1622. But now finally this supposition can be corrected, assigning this mintage to the coinage of “*plata baja*” of 1626.

The reason for the late production of the *plata baja* is in reality not inexplicable. According to documentation in the General Archive of the Indies, on October 2, 1625, that is, the day following the day in which the Cartagena mint opened its doors, the Town Council met with the intent of doing whatever was possible to avoid that coinage of *plata baja* be struck. For this, it was agreed by to give Captain Turrillo a certain amount of money, in compensation, if he would agree to delay the coinage of *plata baja* until the reply from Spain as to the proposed donation of the 40,000 pesos that they had offered the king would come back.¹²⁵ As part of this agreement, Turrillo was asked to instead mint silver coins of the fineness of 11 deniers and 4 grains, in denominations of eight, four, two, one, and half reales. Turrillo accepted, and although this ephemeral mintage [the 5,409 pesos and 3 reales of *plata baja*—Ed.] did indeed come to be produced between January and March 1626, this was handed over to the Royal Treasuries in exchange for the coinage of the legal fineness of silver, where it remained on deposit in the *Caja de los Bienes de Difuntos* (Cashier’s Account for Property of the Deceased), so that this way it would not have much movement while the reply from Spain was awaited (in other words, to keep it out of circulation to the maximum extent possible, and thereby diminish the harm that it might cause).

Today it is not known in what denomination the quantity of *plata baja* that was coined in Cartagena was made. However, since we do know that it was approved in cuartillos, half reales and reales, we can then calculate its total production, which would stand at between 43,275 coins (if all had been in reales) and 173,100 coins (if all had been in cuartillos).

So now the question is, what design was utilized for these coins of *plata baja*? Being that no contemporary document is known that speaks of this matter, it is possible that the design used was the same as already decreed for the cuartillos, which, according to news heard by Spain, was not permitted to circulate. After all, this was going to take the place of the coinage of enriched billon.

The existence of coins of half real with the design decreed for the cuartillos of enriched billon seems to indicate this possibility. Recently, it was thought that only one coin was known in this denomination, this being lot #87 in the Aureo auction of March 5, 2003, later sold as lot #23403 in the Heritage auction No. 3030, January 5, 2014, [where it] was for the first time correctly identified as a half real [following attribution] by the American numismatist Herman Blanton, in 2007. With this said, that it were unique left the doubt as to whether it was in reality a half real, or if it were a cuartillo that had, for inexplicable reasons, been made in error at double its official weight. But now, thanks to the Colombian numismatist, Jorge Becerra, Secretary of the Fundación Numismáticos Colombianos, it has been able to be proved that this coin is not unique.¹²⁶ Although today the whereabouts of the second coin identified is unknown, this one formed part of the collection of the Puerto Rican numismatist Gabriel A. Calbetó in 1974, this being the year in which he shared the news of it with the Colombian academician and numismatic researcher, Antonio Maria Barriga Villalba.



Calbetó Collection
Reported 2 cm diameter
and 3.75 grams weight.
Image courtesy of Jorge
Becerra

These two coins are somewhat controversial in that although they have the correct design authorized for the cuartillos of enriched billon, as I already mentioned, and on one of them even the date of 1622 is visible, the weight of both of them identifies them as of half real, which was a denomination authorized for the *plata baja*, but not for the enriched billon.

Would it be possible that these coins were made in 1622? The date visible on one of them gives this appearance. But not the historical information, which, if it were thus, how could one explain that Turrillo would venture to strike a denomination that had not been authorized, while the one that was, he couldn't even make? With the widespread rejection encountered to his cuartillos of enriched billon, the making of a non-authorized denomination in this metal would have been more than careless on the part of Turrillo, as this would have given his adversaries the evidence necessary to delay his project even further, or even cancel it completely, for disobedience.

Besides, it should be mentioned that Turrillo himself seems to reject this, since when he was obliged to experiment in Spain with denominations larger than the cuartillo, with the proposal of the *plata baja*, Turrillo himself declared his complete opposition, since, according to him, his press was not capable of striking coins of a greater thickness. About this, Turrillo says: "*And today ceases this benefit, because the coinage that is ordered to be made is of greater body and in it will be found sufficient resistance by the force of the said mill to not be able have effect.*"¹²⁷

Lastly, and speaking of the weight of these two coins, one weighs 3.75 grams (the Calbetó example) and the other 4.73 grams (the Aureo/Heritage example.) With the weight of 3.75 grams, this piece is at 0.85 grams below the weight that it should have as a half real, while the other, at 4.73 grams, is at 0.13 grams above. But this can be explained. The superior weight of the Aureo/Heritage coin is so small that in reality it could be justified as within the tolerance of what it should be (it is not strange to find

coins of this period with weights a little bit above what they should be). Now, regarding the loss of weight in the Calbetó coin, this makes it more interesting. True that some of the loss of weight can be attributed to deterioration and wear, which is evident in the photograph of its obverse, and evident in the description of its reverse, of which Calbetó did not supply an image, but says in his letter to Mr. Barriga: “the reverse is very blurred but we can attest to the crowned shield of Castile and León...”¹²⁸ But being so inferior, the rest can be explained by the documentation of the time referring to the coinage of the *plata baja*, in which it is included that in 1627, when the coinage of *plata baja* was delivered to Lieutenant Treasurer Juan Uribe Salazar for consumption, first it was weighed, resulting in a shortfall of 424 Pesos and 5 reales, on the basis of a total quantity of 4,000 ducats, but when they were counted by hand by denomination, only 166 pesos were short. This proved that the required weight had not been strictly kept in the coinage of the *plata baja*, since there were coins that had a lower weight than what they should have had.¹²⁹

All this indicates that it is, indeed, possible that the initial design decreed for the cuartillo coins, might have been used. But, if in fact the design of the enriched billon coin was used for the coinage of *plata baja*, with no alteration whatsoever to the dies, not even to correct their date, this would raise a new question, which had already been proposed by the Chilean numismatist, Carlos Jara.¹³⁰ That question is, would it be possible that the three cuartillos known with this design could also be survivors of the remittance of *plata baja* in place of enriched billon?¹³¹ The answer is that yes it would be possible, but with the difference between these two coins being only the small increment in the proportion of silver in the metallic composition of the *plata baja*, it would then be impossible to differentiate them at plain sight. Lastly, regarding the coin of 1 real of this series, I have to say that, with Turrillo’s commentary about his difficulty in making coins of greater thickness on his invention, and the coinage of *plata baja* being only of two months, it is most probable that these were never made.

In conclusion, Cartagena and Santa Fe received orders for the cessation of the coinage of *plata baja* between the end of 1626 and mid-1627. Obeying these orders, Cartagena proceeded to recall these coins, which in their majority were still deposited in the Royal Treasury. These were eventually handed over, in October 1627, to Lieutenant Treasurer Juan de Uribe Salazar, so that he could consume them. On the part of the city of Santa Fe, this confirms having received the order of His Majesty and entered into its compliance on July 27, 1627.¹³² Thus ends this attempt to introduce billon coinage into the New Kingdom of Granada in the 17th Century.

[Transcription of] Copies of the original documents of the *partidas* of metal for the coining of the *plata baja* in Cartagena and its transcriptions. These accounts were taken from the account books of the mint of Cartagena, in 1638, during the trial conducted by the *Oidor* [Judge] of the Audiencia of Panama, Juan Bautista de la Gasca.

AGI: Escribanía, 830A

<i>for the 2nd</i>	<i>account of the low Fineness Silver three deniers that were made in the aforesaid branch mint on account of the aforesaid treasurer alonso turrillo de Yebra to make the coin of Enriched Billon that his majesty By his Royal decree ordered be made in this Kingdom</i>	
<i>1626 years</i>	<i>~ On Twenty and six january of one thousand and six hundred and twenty and six years. Received Pedro martin del olmo foreman By order And account of the said treasurer two hundred and forty and four marks and four ounces of the said plata Baja To make the said coin</i>	<i>244 marks 4 ounces</i>
	<i>~ On 3 february Received the said Pedro martin On account of the said treasurer three hundred And forty marks of the said silver</i>	<i>340</i>
	<i>~ On tenth of the said Received the said Pedro martin on account of the said treasurer five hundred and thirty marks of the said silver</i>	<i>530</i>
	<i>~ On sixteen of the said the said Received Pedro martin on account of the said treasurer two hundred and fifty and three marks of the said silver</i>	<i>253</i>
	<i>~ On Twenty And five of the said Received the said Pedro martin on account of the said treasurer two hundred And thirty and One marks of the said silver</i>	<i>231</i>
	<i>~ On Twenty And eight of the said Received the said Pedro martin on account of the said treasurer one hundred And thirty and eight marks of the said silver</i>	<i>138</i>
	<i>~ On 12 of march Received the said Pedro martin on account of the said treasurer one hundred And ninety and two marks of the said silver</i>	<i>192</i>
	<i>~ On 24 of the said Received the said Pedro martin from Antonio nuñez gramaxo on account of the said treasurer)</i>	
	<i>1928 marks 4 ounces</i>	

[In left margin:] <i>note this account was made in accordance with the first order that the treasurer had, who had another more recent and in virtue of which this account was done again at folio 47 which is the one that Counts and wherein is declared with greater precision = and this one refers to it</i>	
<i>Two hundred marks of the said plata baja</i>	<i>1928 marks 4 ounces</i>
<i>~ which adds and amounts the said Plata baja three deniers which entered into the said mint on account of said treasurer two thousand one hundred and Twenty and eight marks And four ounces = of which are removed and discounted two hundred and seventy and five marks and six ounces that Were of scrap and poldra the two hundred and forty marks and One ounce of scrap and the thirty and five marks and five ounces of Poldra – And remain liquid one thousand and eight hundred and fifty and two marks and six ounces of which per the Books of the said mint were Delivered for coining one thousand and eight hundred and forty And two marks and four ochavas, And by the Book in the charge of the said treasurer it appears that one thousand and seven hundred And thirty And One marks in which will be said hundred And eleven marks and four ochavas – And the said thousand and seven hundred And thirty And one marks which were coined at the Rate of twenty And five Reales the mark make five thousand And four hundred And nine pesos And three Reales of eight reales the Peso the thousand and eighty And one pesos and seven Reales are of value in trinsic And the four thousand And three hundred And twenty and seven pesos And four Reales of copper. And there was lack of fineness in the said partida six hundred and forty Reales And we caution that although this coinage was made And was Delivered to the official judges of The Royal Treasury of his majesty the quantity that appears – for having supplicated it And that of Santa fe with the inconveniences that were Represented to his majesty. It was served to order that said coin be Picked up And that it be consumed And thus the said Royal officials again Delivered to the treasurer who was of that mint, the said coins.</i>	<i>200</i>
	<i>(= 2128 marks 4 ounces entered into the branch mint silver of fineness 3. Deniers = 2 U 128 marks 4 ounces</i>
	<i>subtract of scrap and poldra = U 275 marks 6 ounces</i>
	<i>Remain = 1 U 852 marks 6 ounces</i>
	<i>By the book of the foreman is evidenced that he delivered for coining 1 U 842 marks 0 ounces 4/8</i>
	<i>By the book of the treasurer is evidenced that 1 U 731 marks were coined</i>
	<i>which amount in Reales at 25 Reales the mark = 5 U 409 pesos 3 Reales</i>
	<i>of Intrinsic value = 1 U 081 pesos 7 Reales</i>
	<i>And of copper in extrinsic Value 4 U 327 pesos 4 Reales</i>
	<i>There was lack of fineness U 640 Reales</i>

<p><i>Having had news of the newly agreed by his majesty= And after having concluded this account which is at folio 11. We saw the said new-order given by his majesty for the Making of the said coinage of Enriched billon and for that it be made giving each mark the fourth Part of silver of fineness two thousand three hundred and eighty. And the three parts of copper And In Accordance with this we make the account Reducing to this that is made to the said leaves = And thus the said thousand and seven hundred And thirty and One marks. had for the fourth part four-hundred and thirty and two marks and six ounces of silver of the said fineness which make three thousand and seven hundred and eighty And six pesos four Reales And two marks and subtracted from five thousand four hundred and nine pesos and three Reales which amount [to] the said thousand seven hundred And thirty and One marks . at the Rate of twenty and five Reales each – Remaining one thousand and six hundred and twenty and two Pesos six Reales and thirty two marks which are of the extrinsic value of copper = made in Cartagena at twelve Days of the month of January of one thousand and six hundred and thirty and eight years</i></p>	<p><i>Plata baja _____</i></p>
	<p><i>The marks of Enriched Billon that were coined amount [to]</i></p> <p><i>= 5 U 409 pesos 3 Reales</i></p>
	<p><i>Had of fine silver –</i></p> <p><i>= 3 U 786 pesos 4 Reales</i></p>
	<p><i>Had of copper</i></p> <p><i>1 U 622 pesos 6 Reales 32 maravedís</i></p>
<p><i>V Sebastian de Alcibia</i></p>	<p><i>Joan de la Huerta</i></p>

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¹ T. Dasí, *Estudio de los Reales de a Ocho* (Valencia, España, 1950), Vol. 1, pp. LV-LXXIX, Document No. 76. "Quaderno de Ordenanças de la lavor de la moneda" (1497. – June 13. – Medina del Campo).

² K. Deagan y J. M. Cruxent. *Columbus's Outpost among the Tainos. Spain and America at La Isabela, 1493-1498*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002, pp. 194-195; *Archaeology at La Isabela: Americas First European Town*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002, pp. 215-221.

³ P. M. Kulstad. *Concepción de la Vega 1495-1564: A Preliminary Look at Lifeways in the Americas First Boom Town*. Thesis presented to the University of Florida, 2008, pp. 106-107.

⁴ The discoveries of this type of coin in Nombre de Dios, Panama, were made during the years 2000-2008 and documented by the author.

⁵ J. A. Proctor. "Americas First Official Coinage". *The Numismatist*. Colorado Springs, CO, Vol. 114, No. 10, October 2001, pp. 1149-1152 and 1176.

⁶ Miguel Estrella Gómez. *Monedas dominicanas desde el descubrimiento hasta nuestros días (1492-1979)*. Editora "Amigos del Hogar". Dominican Republic, 1979, p. 315

⁷ T. Dasí, *Estudio de los Reales de a Ocho* (Valencia, España, 1950), Vol. 2, pp. X-XII, Document No. 371. "Pragmática y Provisión Real, en que Su Majestad manda labrar moneda de vellón rica y la orden que se ha de tener en las Casas de la Moneda de estos Reinos en labrarla" (1566. – December 14).

⁸ Although these coins are physically known and are mentioned in the contemporary documentation, lamentably the decree that authorized their issuance is unknown.

⁹ *Acts of the Courts of Castile, Volume Nine*, Madrid: Imprenta y Fund. de los Hijos de J. A. García, 1885, pp. 381 and 387-390. According to the General Chapters of the Courts of Madrid that were begun in 1586 and ended in 1588, in Chapter V we find the following: “The minor coins and of billon, being in quantity excessive, and more than what is necessary for the effect and ordinary use, is cause of many and notable harms to the republic, since for several years has in these parts been seen by experience; because generally all the cities, villages and places, are so loaded with them, that it seems almost no other coinage than this circulates.”

Acts of the Courts of Castile, Volume Eight, Madrid: Press of the Banco Industrial y Mercantil, 1866, pp. 461-462, In the Acts of the Courts of Castile of 2 May of 1587 is written: “Those of Burgos said: that were large the damages and inconveniences that follow from the large amount of billon that there now is and circulates throughout the Kingdom, and that it would matter that it stopped being produced and that no licenses for that as up to now have been given. The Kingdom having taken up the matter, agreed that the aforesaid gentlemen make a report of the inconveniences that from this results, and bring it to the Kingdom so that it may therein be seen and agreed upon whatever is convenient.”

¹⁰ J. de Santiago Fernández, “Moneda y fiscalidad en Castilla durante el siglo XVI”, in *IV Jornadas Científicas sobre Documentación en Castilla e Indias en el siglo XVI*, Madrid, 2005, p. 431. According to the reports of the so called Commission of Madrid, in 1594, the total elimination of the alloy of silver of billon was recommended to the king, in consideration of that what gave value to this coinage was not the silver but the stamp, that is, the seal of the monarch that validated it.

¹¹ de Santiago Fernández (ibid, n. 10), pág. 432. According to Javier de Santiago Fernández, this ordinance had no effect until after the 8th of August of 1602, when the last shipment of billon with 1 grain of silver was made in the Mint of Segovia (Archivo General de Simancas, Tribunal Mayor de Cuentas, folder 912, y Contaduría Mayor de Cuentas, 3rd period, folder 2626, no. 8).

¹² E. M. García Guerra, “La moneda de vellón: un instrumento al servicio de la fiscalidad del Estado moderno Castellano: Las Cortes”, in *Revista Científica Complutense: Cuadernos de Historia Moderna*, No. 21, Madrid, 1998, pp. 77-78. Website: <http://revistas.ucm.es/main.php>

¹³ Archivo General de Indias (AGI): Santa Fe, 19, R. 3, N. 28.

¹⁴ AGI: Santa Fe, 19, R. 4, N. 45.

¹⁵ J. Friede. *Documentos Sobre la Fundación de la Casa de Moneda en Santa Fe de Bogotá (1614-1635) Conservados en el Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla, Transcritos y Anotados*. Bogotá, Colombia, 1963, Doc. 2, p. 48

¹⁶ Friede (ibid, n. 15).

¹⁷ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 3, pp. 49-52.

¹⁸ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), p. 51.

¹⁹ Friede (ibid, n. 18).

²⁰ AGI: Santa Fe, 536, L. 11, F. 172v-178v.

²¹ AGI: Santa Fe, 536, L. 11, F. 173v

²² AGI: Santa Fe, 536, L. 11, F. 174v-175v.

²³ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 6, pp. 63-64.

²⁴ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 5, pp. 62-63.

²⁵ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 7 pp. 65-66.

²⁶ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 15, p. 74.

²⁷ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 16, p. 75.

²⁸ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 21, pp. 78-79.

²⁹ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 22, pp. 79-80.

³⁰ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 23, pp. 80-81

- ³¹ AGI: Santa Fe, 536, L. 11, F. 234r-235r.
- ³² AGI (ibid, n. 31).
- ³³ Friede (op. cit. n. 33), p. 201.
- ³⁴ AGI: Contratación, 2899, L. 2, F. 46v.
- ³⁵ Friede (op. cit. n. 33); Contratación, 5374, N. 3.
- ³⁶ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), p. 122; AGI: Santa Fe, 21, R. 6, N. 100. Although in his letter of 1 August 1621 Turrillo only tells us that he arrived “at this city of Cartagena on the ninth of last month” without telling us to which month he referred, this can be deduced calculating the amount of time the voyage took, besides through the document in the General Archive of the Indies: Santa Fe, 21, R. 6, N. 100, which shows that Turrillo was already in Cartagena in the month of April.
- ³⁷ AGI: Santa Fe, 20, R.1, N. 25.
- ³⁸ Friede (op. cit. n. 36).
- ³⁹ Friede (op. cit. n. 36).
- ⁴⁰ AGI (op. cit. n. 36).
- ⁴¹ AGI (op. cit. n. 36).
- ⁴² Friede (op. cit. n. 15), p. 99. The use of “Prince” in this correspondence indicates that Cartagena was already aware of the death of King Phillip III, which occurred on the 31st of March of 1621. But, being that this news was not yet received in an official capacity, they used the title of prince for Phillip IV, until they should receive news that he had already been proclaimed king.
- ⁴³ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 32, pp. 98-100.
- ⁴⁴ Friede (op. cit. n. 42).
- ⁴⁵ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), p. 126.
- ⁴⁶ Friede (op. cit. n. 45).
- ⁴⁷ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), p. 202.
- ⁴⁸ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 28, pp. 87-88.
- ⁴⁹ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 33, pp. 113-120.
- ⁵⁰ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 34, p. 122.
- ⁵¹ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), p. 142.
- ⁵² Friede (op. cit. n. 15), p. 125.
- ⁵³ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 35, pp. 122-132 and 142.
- ⁵⁴ Friede (op. cit. n. 45).
- ⁵⁵ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), p. 132.
- ⁵⁶ S. R. Zucker, *Plvs Vltra Newsletter*, “1621 Nuevo Reino de Granada 8 Reales Silver Cobs: First Coin Issue of Colombia,” (West Palm Beach, Florida, 2005), Vol. 23, No. 1, pp. 6-7.
- ⁵⁷ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), pp. 131-132.
- ⁵⁸ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 36, pp. 132-134.
- ⁵⁹ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), pp. 134-136.
- ⁶⁰ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 38, p. 136.
- ⁶¹ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), p. 137.
- ⁶² Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 39, pp. 137-141.
- ⁶³ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 40, p. 142.
- ⁶⁴ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 41, pp. 143-144.
- ⁶⁵ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 43, pp. 145-146.
- ⁶⁶ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 42, pp. 144-145; AGI: Santa Fe, 536, L. 11, F. 260r-260v.
- ⁶⁷ AGI: Santa Fe, 536, L. 11, F. 260v.
- ⁶⁸ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 44, pp. 146-156.
- ⁶⁹ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), p. 147.
- ⁷⁰ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), p. 155.
- ⁷¹ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 52, pp. 205-209.
- ⁷² Friede (op. cit. n. 15), p. 156.

- ⁷³ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 45, pp. 156-168.
- ⁷⁴ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 48, pp. 184-188.
- ⁷⁵ N. del Castillo Mathieu. *El Puerto de Cartagena Visto por Algunos Autores Coloniales*, published in "Thesaurus", *Boletín del Instituto Caro y Cuervo Tomo XX*, No. 1, Bogotá: enero-abril 1965, p. 147.
- ⁷⁶ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), pp. 202-203.
- ⁷⁷ Fray Pedro Simón (1574-ca.-1628) Franciscan Friar and Spanish historian who came to the New Kingdom of Granada in 1604. As a missionary, he travelled all over the territory and in 1623 was named *Custodian of the Franciscan Province of the New Kingdom of Granada*. Having already composed two volumes of his *Noticias historiales de las Conquistas de Tierra Firme en las Indias Occidentales* he asks license to print his work which was conceded to him in that same year. The first part was published in Cuenca in 1627, but with his death, the rest of the work remained unpublished, for which it was not until 1892 when finally his work was published in complete form.
- Fr. P. Simón, *Noticias historiales de las conquistas de tierra firme en las Indias Occidentales*, Parts Second and Third (1627), published for the first time over the manuscripts of the National Library and with assistance from the Ministry of Public Instruction, Bogotá, 1892, p. 281. In the "Septima Noticia Historial de las Conquistas de Tierra Firme" of his work, Chapter XL, Fray Pedro Simón writes about the city of Santa Fe: "*Last year of one thousand six hundred and twenty two, was established the Mint, wherein started to be made gold, silver and billon, and this with five parts of silver; but because of grave inconveniences that offered themselves after a little had been of everything, the hand of the other was raised by one Alonso Turrillo de Hiebra, who brought this in his charge, and appeal was made to the Royal Council...*"
- ⁷⁸ AGI: Escribanía, 830A. Estacio Sanguino Rangel, who later would be the scribe of the Mint of Santa Fe, testified in 1637: "*...that around the year of twenty and two which was the first time that came to this City the aforesaid Alonso Turrillo he made coin of silver and Billon because this witness had a few tarjas* [Transl. note: "tarja" is an old Spanish term for an old Spanish coin worth about a quarter of a real] *of it and after because of disputes that occurred between Cartagena, and this city with the aforesaid Alonso turrillo de yebra the manufacture of Billon was suspended and the reason because is stated in the acts there are about this that passed in the royal audiencia.*"
- ⁷⁹ AGI (ibid, n. 78).
- ⁸⁰ AGI (op. cit. n. 78).
- ⁸¹ *Dinero, moneda y crédito en la monarquía hispánica: Actas del Simposio Internacional Dinero, Moneda y Crédito: de la Monarquía Hispánica a la Integración Monetaria Europea*, Madrid, 4-7 May 1999, Antonio M. Bernal (ed.), Madrid, 2000. Section titled, "Remesas, situado y Real Hacienda en el siglo XVII" por Hermes Továr Pinzón, p. 262.
- ⁸² Friede (op. cit. n. 15), p. 209
- ⁸³ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), p. 204
- ⁸⁴ AGI (op. cit. n. 36).
- ⁸⁵ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 47, pp. 183-184
- ⁸⁶ AGI: Contratación, 1144
- ⁸⁷ AGI: México, 29, N. 101.
- ⁸⁸ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), p. 204.
- ⁸⁹ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), p. 207.
- ⁹⁰ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 52, pp. 205-209.
- ⁹¹ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), p. 224.
- ⁹² Friede (op. cit. n. 91).
- ⁹³ AGI: Santa Fe, 63, N. 47.
- ⁹⁴ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 53, p. 209.
- ⁹⁵ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 54, p. 210.

- ⁹⁶ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 55, pp. 211-212.
- ⁹⁷ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 56, pp. 212-213.
- ⁹⁸ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 57, pp. 213-214.
- ⁹⁹ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 58, pp. 214-215.
- ¹⁰⁰ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 59, pp. 215-216.
- ¹⁰¹ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 60, pp. 217-218.
- ¹⁰² Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 61, pp. 218-219.
- ¹⁰³ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 62, pp. 219-220.
- ¹⁰⁴ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 63, pp. 220-223.
- ¹⁰⁵ AGI: Santa Fe, 536, L. 12, F. 6v. The original document is torn, missing its top left part, for which, unfortunately, we have lost the detail of which was the mint to which it was being sent.
- ¹⁰⁶ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), p. 233.
- ¹⁰⁷ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 65, pp. 224-226.
- ¹⁰⁸ AGI: Santa Fe, 536, L. 12, F. 10r-10v.
- ¹⁰⁹ AGI: Santa Fe, 536, L. 12, F. 11r-11v.
- ¹¹⁰ AGI: Santa Fe, 536, L. 12, F. 22v-23r.
- ¹¹¹ AGI: Santa Fe, 536, L. 12, F. 23r-26r.
- ¹¹² AGI: Santa Fe, 536, L. 12, F. 24v-25r.
- ¹¹³ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 72, pp. 238-240.
- ¹¹⁴ AGI: Contratación, 1174, N. 2.
- ¹¹⁵ AGI: Contratación, 5173; AGI: Santa Fe, 39, R. 2, N. 7. Among the documents of the Board of Trade appears the date 29 April 1625, as the date on which this fleet left Cadiz. But in a letter written on 30 July 1625 by the Governor of Cartagena, Diego de Escobar, who sailed in this fleet, he tells the king that the departure of this fleet from Cadiz had taken place on the 28th of April.
- ¹¹⁶ AGI: Contratación, 5793, L. 1, F. 366r-367v.
- ¹¹⁷ AGI: Contratación, 5173.
- ¹¹⁸ AGI: Santa Fe, 39, R. 2, N. 7. In this letter of the Governor of Cartagena, Diego de Escobar, he says that the amount that had been authorized in coins of *plata baja* was 40,000 ducats. This being the only source that cites this other amount of 40,000 ducats, it is most probable that the governor committed an error in documenting the correct amount, which ought to have been 60,000 ducats.
- ¹¹⁹ AGI (Ibid, n. 118).
- ¹²⁰ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), p. 254.
- ¹²¹ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 78, pp. 249-256.
- ¹²² Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 79, pp. 256-261.
- ¹²³ Friede (op. cit. n. 15), Doc. 80, pp. 262-263.
- ¹²⁴ AGI (op. cit. n. 78).
- ¹²⁵ AGI (Ibid, n. 124).
- ¹²⁶ J. Becerra (personal communication, January 12, 2016.) The estimable Mr. Jorge Becerra provided me with copies of the important communication written between the 23rd of June and the 27th of July of 1974, by Gabriel A. Calbetó and A. M. Barriga, which includes a photograph of the obverse of this coin.
- ¹²⁷ Friede (op. cit. n. 106).
- ¹²⁸ Becerra (op. cit. n. 126). Letter of Gabriel A. Calbetó to A. M. Barriga, dated 23 June 1974.
- ¹²⁹ A. M. Barriga, *Historia de la Casa de Moneda* (Bogotá, Colombia, 1969), Vol. I, pg. 233.
- ¹³⁰ Heritage Auctions, Inc., World & Ancient Coin Signature Auction #3030, New York, 5-6 January 2014, Lot #23403.
- ¹³¹ J. E. Restrepo. *Coins of Colombia 1619 to 2012*, Medellín, Colombia, 2012, p. 68.
- ¹³² Barriga (op. cit. n. 129), pg. 182.

Addendum to article “**The Billon Coins Struck in the Nuevo Reino de Granada in 1622 and 1626**” in *NI Bulletin Vol. 52, Nos. 7 / 8, July / August 2017*

Jorge A. Proctor, NI #2732

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[Addendum to electronic version pdf, not distributed with printed magazine]

The following transcripts in Spanish are supplied should inquiry of the English translation arise. For source reference we refer the reader to the Spanish archives.

AGI: Santa Fe, 536, L. 11, F. 234r-235r.

El dicho ¹⁸

Al Gobernador y oficiales de Cartaxena rremitiendoles lo que pide el cappitan Turrillo cerca de que se ponga en aquella çiudad una oficina la casa de moneda que a de fundar en el nuevo Reyno de Granada donde se labre la plata Corriente q Vbiere en aquella Tierra

El Rey

Don Garcia Giron mi Governador y Cappitan general dela provinçia de cartaxena y oficiales de mi Real Hacienda della aViendo me suplicado el cappitan Alonso Turrillo mi yngeniero militar que por orden mia ba a fundar Cassa de moneda en La ciudad de de Santa fee del Nuevo Reyno de Granada que para que se Consumiese la plata Corriente que ay en esa Provinçia y se probeyesen las yslas de barLovento y otras circunVecinas de moneda para su Trato y Comerçio se le diese Liçençia Para q En esa Ciudad se pusiese Vna oficina dela dicha Cassa donde labrase La dicha moneda pues de mas del Benefiçio General que rresultaria de Recoger la dicha plata Corriente se escusarian Los gastos y costas q Terna el llebarla a Labrar a la dicha cassa de moneda . por Vna mi çedula fecha a diez de Junio deste año os ymbie a Mandar q aViendo Visto y considerado esto Con la atenzion que el casso Requiere Embiasedes Relacion distinta y particular de los pros y Contrass q Tubiese al Pressidente Y oidores demi audiençia Real dela dicha çiudad de Santa fee para q Visto Todo Con lo que de nuevo se les offreciese por lo que tocasse aquel Reyno se tomase la Resoluçion que mas Conbiniese = y agora El dicho Cappitan Alonsso Turrillo me a hecho Relaçion que si Vbiesse de aguardar en esa ciudad La rresoluçion de la dicha mi audiençia se le seguirian Muchas Costas y gastos demas de la des- Comodidad q Ternia el y la gente que consigo lleva pues hera forçoso esperar mas de dos meses Supplicome Mandase que con solo Vuestro parecer se hiciese y aViendose visto por los de mi Conssejo de las yndias e Tenido por bien de rremitiros Lo sobre dicho Como por la pressente os lo rremito para que parezien-do os ser nezessario que se haga la dicha oficina y no Teniendo yncombiniente probeais y deis orden Como se haga y execute y si le TuBiere me aVisareis luego para que se provea lo que Combenga fecho en san Lorenzo

a Veinte de septiembre de mill y seiscientos y Veinte años yo el Rey Por mandado del Rey nuestro señor Pedro de Ledesma señalada del Conssejo

AGI: Escribanía, 830A *transcription in part*

Archivo General de Indias / Escribanía de Cámara de Justicia / Visitas / Audiencia de Santa Fe / Escribanía, 830A

(2017-06-23 digital copy not online, description only)

Código de Referencia: ES.41091.AGI/20.90.20/ESCRIBANIA,830A

Título Nombre atribuido: VISITAS AUDIENCIA DE SANTA FE

Fecha Formación: 1636

Nombre del productor: Consejo de Indias. Escribanía de Cámara

Alcance y Contenido: 1636 Visita de las Casas de Moneda de Cartagena y Santa Fé a cargo del Tesorero Alonso Turrillo de Yebra por Juan Bautista de la Gasca, Oidor de la Audiencia de Panamá. No consta su determinación. (Continúa en 830B) 9 piezas

<i>para el 2º</i>	<i>quenta de la Plata baja Ley tres dineros que se labro en la dicha cassa officina por quenta del dicho thessorero alonso turrillo de Yebra para hazer la moneda de Vellon Rico que su magestad Por su Real cedula mando se labrase en este Reyno</i>	
<i>1626 años</i>	<i>~ En Veynte y seis de henero de mill y seiscientos y veinte y seis años. Recivio Pedro martin del olmo capataz Por orden Y quenta del dicho tesorero ducientos y quarenta y quatro marcos y quatro onças dela dicha Plata baja Para hazer la dicha moneda</i>	<i>244 marcos 4 onças</i>
	<i>~ En 3 de febrero Recívio el dicho Pedro martin Por quenta del dicho thessorero trecientos Y quarenta marcos dela dicha plata</i>	<i>340</i>
	<i>~ En diez del dicho Recibio el dicho Pedro martin por quenta del dicho thessorero quinientos y treynta marcos dela dicha plata</i>	<i>530</i>
	<i>~ En diez Y seis del dicho Recívio el dicho Pedro martin por quenta del dicho thessorero ducientos y cinquenta y tres marcos de la dicha plata</i>	<i>253</i>
	<i>~ En Veynte y çinco del dicho Recívio El dicho Pedro martin por quenta del dicho thessorero ducientos y treynta y Vn marcos de dicha plata</i>	<i>231</i>
	<i>~ En Veynte Y ocho del dicho Recivio el dicho Pedro martin por quenta del dicho thessorero ciento Y treynta y ocho marcos de la dicha plata</i>	<i>138</i>
	<i>~ En 12 de março Recibio el dicho Pedro martin por quenta del dicho thessorero ciento y noventa y dos marcos de la dicha plata</i>	<i>192</i>
	<i>~ En 24 del dicho Recibio el dicho Pedro martin de antonio nuñez gramaxo por quenta del dicho Thesorero)</i>	
	<i>1928 marcos 4 onças</i>	

<i>notta esta quenta se hiço conforme a la primera orden q' tuvo el thessorero, el qual tuvo otra mas moderna y en virtud della se hiço de nuevo esta quenta a folio 47 que es la que Vale y donde se declara con mas distincion = Y assi esta se refiere a ella</i>	
<i>Ducientos marcos de la dicha Plata baja</i>	<i>1928 marcos 4 onças</i>
<i>~ que ssumma Y monta la dicha Plata baja Ley tres dineros que entro en la dicha officina por quenta del dicho thessorero dos mill ciento y Veynte y ocho marcos Y quatro onças = de los quales se quitan y descuentan duçientos y setenta y çinco marcos y seis onças que Vbo de çiçalla Y poldra los duçientos y quarenta marcos y Vna onça de çiçalla y los treynta y cinco marcos y çinco onças de Poldra – Y quedan liquidos mill y ochocientos y çinquenta y dos marcos y seis onças delos quales consta por los Libros de la dicha offiçina se Entregaron para a cuñar mill y ochoçientos y quarenta Y dos marcos y quatro ochavas, Y por el Libro del cargo del dicho thesorero parece que se acuñaron mill y setecientos y treynta Y Vn marcos en que ban a decir çiento Y once marcos y quatro ochavas – Y los dichos mill y setecientos Y treynta Y vn marcos que se acuñaron a Razon de veynte Y cinco Reales el marco hazen çinco mill Y quatrocientos y nueve pesos Y tres Reales de a ocho Reales el pesso los mill y ochenta Y vn pesos y siete Reales son de valor yntrínscico Y los quatro mill Y trecientos Y veynte y siete pesos Y quatro Reales de cobre. Y Vbo de feble en la dicha partida seisçientos y quarenta Reales Y se adbierte que aunque se labro esta moneda Y se Entrego a los jueces offiçiales de La Real Hazienda de su magestad esta çiudad la cantidad que parecera – por aver suplicado ella Y la de Santa fee con los ynconbenientes que Representaron a su magestad. fue servido de mandar Recoger la dicha moneda Y que se consumiese Y assi los dichos oficiales Reales bolbieron a Entregar al thessorero que hera de la dicha cassa, la dicha moneda</i>	<i>200</i>
	<i>(= 2128 marcos 4 onças entraron en la cassa officina de plata ley 3. Dineros = 2 U 128 marcos 4 onças</i>
	<i>quitanse de cícalla y poldra = U 275 marcos 6 onças</i>
	<i>Quedan = 1 U 852 marcos 6 onças</i>
	<i>Por el libro del capataz consta q' entrego para acuñar = 1 U 842 marcos 0 onças 4/8</i>
	<i>Por el libro del thessorero consta que se acuñaron = 1 U 731 marcos</i>
	<i>que montan en Reales a 25 Reales marco = 5 U 409 pesos 3 Reales</i>
	<i>de valor Yntrínscico tuvieron = 1 U 081 pesos 7 Reales</i>
	<i>Y de cobre en el Valor estrínscico 4 U 327 pesos 4 Reales</i>
	<i>Vbo de feble U 640 Reales</i>

<p><i>Tenido noticia de lo nuevamente acordado por su magestad = Y despues de aver fenecido esta quenta que esta a folio 11. Vimos la dicha nueva orden que da su magestad para la Labor dela dicha moneda de vellon Rico y por ella manda se labre dandole a cada marco la quarta Parte de plata de ley dos mill trecientos y ochenta . Y las tres partes de cobre Y En esta Conformidad hacemos la quenta Reduciendo a esta la que esta hecha a las dichas foxas = Y assi los dichos mill y setecientos Y treynta y Vn marcos. tuvieron por la quarta parte quatrocientos y treynta y dos marcos y seis onças de plata dela dicha ley que hazen tres mill y setecientos y ochenta Y seis pesos quatro Reales Y dos marcos y descontados de cinco mill quatrocientos y nueve pesos y tres Reales que montan los dichos mill setecientos Y treynta y Vn marcos. a Razon de veynte y cinco Reales cada vno - Restan mill y seiscientos y veynte y dos Pesos seis Reales y treynta y dos marcos que son del valor estrinsico del cobre = fecho en cartagena a doçe Dias del mes de henero de mill y seiscientos y terynta y ocho años _____</i></p>	<p><i>Plata baja _____</i></p>
	<p><i>Los marcos de Vellon Rico q' se labraron montan</i></p> <p><i>= 5 U 409 pesos 3 Reales</i></p>
	<p><i>Tuvieron de plata fina -</i></p> <p><i>= 3 U 786 pesos 4 Reales</i></p>
	<p><i>Tuvieron de cobre</i></p> <p><i>1 U 622 pesos 6 Reales 32 maravedís</i></p>
<p><i>V Sebastian de Alcibia</i></p>	<p><i>Joan de la Huerta</i></p>

End Addendum

NI